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Jeudi 9 juin 2005

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Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 June 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 juin 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (TEST PSA POUR
LE DÉPISTAGE DU CANCER DE LA
PROSTATE)

Mr. Mauro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 201, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-
santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Mauro, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I'd like to begin by introducing a couple of people in the gallery who have taken the time to come out and support this initiative: Mr. John Peck, who is the chair of the Early Prostate Cancer Diagnosis Ontario; and Mr. Greg Sarney, a representative of Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Canada. They are here with us today. I should also mention that Dr. John Trachtenberg from Princess Margaret Hospital, a world-renowned neurologist and prostate cancer specialist, would have liked to be here but was unable to make it today.

PSA stands for prostate specific antigen. This substance is produced in the prostate glands of healthy men but is released into the blood stream when the structure of the prostate starts to break down, such as when cancer is present. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men. At least one in every eight Canadian men is expected to develop the disease in their lifetime; 27% will die of it. In 2000 alone over 1,300 men died as a result of prostate cancer. Up to 20,000 Canadian men are diagnosed every year, and about 7,600 of those men are in Ontario.

We know that as the Canadian population continues to age, and as more men move into their high-risk areas, these numbers are only going to increase. It is incumbent

upon us that we be prepared to address this increasing number of men who are going to be developing this disease in the years to come.

A radical prostatectomy would cost about \$16,000 in the year 2000, before it had spread. After that, it would cost about \$32,000 for treatment. It is very likely that a cost-benefit analysis would indicate and clearly support the fact that, on an economic basis, this test could be justified.

We understand, all of us who have paid some attention to this issue, and those who have dealt with it before in this Legislature, that there is not unanimity when it comes to validity, the clinical efficacy of this test. Everybody acknowledges that. However, if you deal with the medical practitioners, the people who are actually involved in the treatment of this disease, you will find that the number of people who support the test far outweigh those who do not. In fact, much of the resistance to the use of this test being paid for by OHIP comes from people who are not actually medical practitioners. There are some reasons given on a regular basis as to why this test should not be funded. One of those is that the test can produce a false negative, and on its surface, that would seem to make a lot of sense. Why would we pay for a test that could lead someone with this disease to think that perhaps they do not have the disease? But clearly, you do not stop testing at that point. There is strong evidence that suggests that this test should be used on an annual basis to create baseline data, and from that data, you can then determine what may or may not be happening with the patient.

There is also the argument that's made on a regular basis about false positives being a result of this test and that those false positives can lead to stress for the individuals. We would argue that the individual patient, the man himself, should be the one who determines what levels of stress he is able to deal with, and would clearly argue that there's a lot more stress associated with not having the early diagnosis and then being diagnosed later, when we know his disease is much more difficult to treat. We all agree that this test is not perfect, but we do all know that it is still the best way to catch this disease early, before it spreads. It's important to note that there are often no symptoms associated with this disease and that it is most curable in its early stages.

Mr. Aaron Bacher is the chairman of the Toronto Man to Man Prostate Cancer Support Group. I'd like to read you a little bit about what he has had to say on this issue:

"As chairman of the Toronto Man to Man Prostate Cancer Support Group, the largest such group in Canada,

we see too many men at our meetings who are the direct result of putting off getting a PSA test done until it was too late. All the men who come to our meetings do so after being diagnosed with prostate cancer, and they come to us looking for answers. We hear about how they didn't get the test done because it was going to cost them a few dollars, or their GP told them it wasn't necessary because of the cost, or that the test is 'unreliable.'"

Professor Laurence Klotz wrote an article just about a year ago, and it appeared in the Toronto Globe and Mail. Professor Klotz is at the University of Toronto and the head of the prostate cancer support group at Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre. This is what he had to say:

"A rapid rise in PSA has been clearly demonstrated to be associated with aggressive prostate cancer. Furthermore, by the time someone developed advanced prostate cancer, the PSA is almost always very high. The widespread use of PSA testing has resulted in the disease being diagnosed at a stage when it is much more curable. More important, death from prostate cancer has dropped 25% in the past years in North America. This advance deserves as large a headline as the one casting suspicion on the PSA test."

What this speaks to is one of the relatively new innovations when it comes to dealing with prostate cancer in men in the last four or five years, and that is that the development of baseline data in the treating of cancer patients or people who have not been diagnosed yet is an extremely useful tool for medical practitioners when it comes to the early detection of this disease. The velocity of the change in the PSA levels, the rapidity of the change, is a very useful tool for physicians when they're treating their patients in determining whether or not they may have cancer. It's a great indicator for them to use in terms of whether or not they should move forward with a biopsy or other things.

No one suggests for a second that the PSA test should replace some of the other tests that are being used to make determinations around this disease, such as the DRE, but clearly this is an advancement that has occurred in the last four or five years and is an extremely useful tool. It can only be a tool if we begin to fund this and accumulate this data on an annual basis.

It's important to note also that younger men generally have cancers or higher PSA levels that are much faster-moving, whereas older men generally develop one that is much slower-moving. The danger, of course, is that younger men tend to be asymptomatic, and the danger is also that younger men are less likely to get tested. So it makes it that much more important. This is all about early diagnosis so that we can avoid the results that are generally associated with those diseases, and they're very serious: incontinence, impotence and, of course, potential death.

There's broad-based support for this initiative, for the funding of this procedure on a regular basis. The Early Prostate Cancer Diagnosis Ontario, as I have mentioned, the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Canada, the

Canadian Prostate Cancer Network, and local groups like, in my community, the Thunder Bay Us Too group, and locally in Toronto the Man To Man Prostate Cancer Support Group. I'm sure that most, if not all, members of this Legislative Assembly have groups that exist within their constituencies that likely are in support of this initiative. I would have no doubt, and I'm sure that most members have received many of the same e-mails I have since this bill was first tabled in the Legislature that would suggest, that there is broad-based support for this initiative.

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Earlier, I spoke a little bit about the controversy that surrounds this test, to some degree. I can't help but reference that when I talk about some of the other support that exists beyond the province of Ontario. It's not just a few provinces that fund this, but many. Saskatchewan funds this test through their provincial payment health plan. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island all fund this test through their provincial health care plans—all of them. In fact, British Columbia, as a seventh, also funds it, but that is only after a test comes back as positive. So clearly, if we're going to address some of the people who have some negative things or uncertainties around the validity of this test, we would have to wonder why six—in fact seven—other provinces find the efficacy of this test to be fine and that it justifies their provincial health plans funding it.

The facts are quite simple and quite straightforward: The PSA test is responsible for saving lives. There are many men in the province of Ontario today and across this country who would not be alive had it not been for an early diagnosis that was attributable to a PSA test. It's important to note that many of these men were asymptomatic at the time of their diagnosis. It's clear: PSA testing saves lives. And quite possibly, PSA testing could save the government money. I thank you for your time. This is clearly an issue whose time has come.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the bill brought by the member, Bill 201, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act. He spoke a lot about the tests that need to be done when there are no symptoms showing in people. I think that's a big policy statement for health care that they may need to look at, that is, preventive medicine and early testing and early detection. I'm pleased this has been discussed. Many times in my communities and in the newspapers—and I think this is a great topic to be brought forward for private members' business that we do on Thursday morning—we bring things from our communities that need to be brought forward and get attention, in this case hopefully by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to do some implementation that would lead to early detection, early treatment and a cure.

A constituent of mine, who's a gentleman over 70, which is certainly an age group that is more prone to getting prostate cancer, e-mailed me: "After having four

PSA tests during the last five to six years, my last in August 2005 showed a trace of prostate cancer for the first time. It's really vital that men after the age of 50 have these tests done on a regular basis. It's been proven that prostate cancer kills more males in the world than any other disease. In fact, most males die not knowing that they have prostate cancer."

As men get older, they're certainly more concerned about this type of cancer, but we're learning to pay more attention to their health. Certainly in the 50 age group with women, more tests should be done, and I think we should look at what tests should be done more commonly for men. It is all about prevention and early detection.

It's more common in men over 50, men with a family history of prostate cancer, one or two first-degree relatives, such as a father or brother, and men of African ancestry. Certainly the family history—if we haven't been doing the tests long enough, they don't have that history or knowledge. Sometimes they do have the positive family markers that need to be followed in certain diseases.

My riding has the second-highest percentage of seniors in the province, Haliburton county having the largest seniors' percentage in Ontario. Being able to screen for prostate cancer is a matter of concern for many constituents in all areas of the riding, but screening means testing men who don't have the symptoms to see if they have prostate cancer. The reason for doing this, like other cancer screening techniques, is early detection.

The PSA test is just one of the early detection tests that can be done for prostate cancer. It's a blood test that measures a substance produced by the prostate gland called the prostate specific antigen, or the acronym PSA, and it tells doctors when patients have a higher than normal level of PSA. It usually means that the patient has a prostate problem, not necessarily meaning they have cancer. But again, it is a red flag to be followed.

For every 100 men over the age of 50 with no symptoms who have the PSA test, 10 will have a higher than normal level of PSA. These men must then go through other tests and examinations. At the end of these tests, three of the men with a higher than normal PSA level will be found to have prostate cancer. Seven of the men with a higher than normal PSA level will be found not to have prostate cancer at the time of screening. Of the 90 men who will have a normal PSA level, 88 will not have prostate cancer. One or two of the men with a normal PSA level will actually have prostate cancer, undetected by the test, that will cause symptoms.

So the test will identify some men who don't have cancer and also miss some men who do have cancer. The test might miss some people, but no test is perfect. In some cases, it will find cancer that would otherwise have been missed. Finding cancer early is key to successful treatment. Access to primary care and access to doctors is always a difficulty in some of our communities, but it's an opportunity to have these tests done.

Dr. Cornelia Baines was one of the women researchers who launched the national breast screening study in the

1980s. She observed that thorough professional breast examination, along with training in breast self-examination, is invaluable for women. At that point in the 1980s, there was no self-examination for men who worried about the possibility of prostate cancer. I think dealing with a blood test and going to a doctor's office is more comfortable for men to deal with and gives us a starting point into the possibility that they may have problems with prostate cancer. It's a decision that each man has to make, but I think there should be more awareness about early detection, the ease of having a blood test, and the fact that a man may have a family history, if he knows of it, and that he is more susceptible.

In 1997, the National Prostate Cancer Forum recommended that all men should have an opportunity to have the PSA test done. Right now, the fee associated with it is always a bit of a deterrent to accessing PSA testing. They might let it go and just not do it. So I think if more awareness is out there for men to weigh the benefits of having the test and not having to worry—I think worrying in medicine, the fear of the unknown, is a big deterrent to going and getting tested and hopefully relieving yourself that you don't have it. If the diagnosis is, unfortunately, positive, then you have to deal with it from there.

So we should be supportive of giving men the ability to choose whether or not to have the test without having to consider whether they can afford it, as was mentioned. Cancer Care Ontario will be coming to the government later this summer to ask for the funding commitment to allow for the use of Herceptin for women in the early stages of breast cancer, so I hope the Minister of Health will look seriously at that and at PSA testing for men. I'm pleased today to support the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan for introducing this private member's bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to say at the outset that the NDP caucus will be supporting this initiative. I think it's a good one and long overdue. Quite frankly, we know that the best fight that we have to try to allow people who may end up with cancer to live longer is to detect it while it's in its very early stages.

On that note, a number of you might have heard, I think it was last Saturday or Sunday—I was driving somewhere on Highway 11 to one of the community events—a very interesting program on CBC Radio where they talked to experts in the research field around this very issue. They talked about what kind of impact we have made over the last number of years, considering all of the money that's been spent in research, to try to figure out more about the disease of cancer and what can be done to combat it.

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It was quite interesting and quite revealing, because we've learned a lot, I guess, is what they were saying; however, we have really only scratched the surface. The gist of what they said through that entire interview—and there were people there from Cancer Care Ontario, researchers from British Columbia, from Ontario and others—is that we've been really putting our emphasis on

trying to cure the disease, and maybe one of the things we need to do much more vigorously is to figure out how to detect the disease at an earlier stage, because one thing they have learned through the science of medicine is that if you're able to detect cancer—most cancers; not all, but a lot of them—at a much earlier point, you're much better able to manage the disease and, many times, to be able to reverse the disease, and the person can go on to live a very long life.

We've all known people in our families where that's happened. We've known others in our families, unfortunately, where that has not happened. I know people, as everybody else does, who have gone out for prostate tests, have been detected at a very early stage, have had the opportunity for treatment, there has been no residual effect at the end of the treatment, and these people are still with us today. I think of the former Treasurer of Ontario, Floyd Laughren. Floyd was the Treasurer of Ontario back in about 1993 or 1994, and I believe it was a PSA test that detected the very early beginnings of prostate cancer. He went in for surgery and he's still with us today. He's in full remission from that particular cancer. So I think it goes to prove that you're able to really have a much stronger effect in combating the disease if we're able to detect earlier.

That brings me to where I want to go in this particular debate, which is, yes, we have to support this initiative and, yes, we have to make sure that the Minister of Health and the Treasurer of Ontario find the money necessary to do what other provinces are doing when it comes to paying for the PSA test. But I think one of the things that we need to also look at is the whole issue of lifestyle. You know, I'm 48 years old and I'm only now starting to come to terms with my mortality, and thinking to myself, "Well, you know, at one point you've got to get yourself under control when it comes to exercise, eating, all of those things," because we know that lifestyle is a great contributor to a number of diseases, including cancers.

One of the things that I thought was interesting as they talked on the show the other day is that there has been an increasing amount of cancer within our society, and I always thought it was because we're better able to detect. Because of our public health care system, when people are not feeling well they are able to get in to see a doctor, they're able to get into a hospital for treatment, and we're better able to detect that people have cancer. Maybe that's why we're seeing a higher rate. But obviously the other part of it is that a lot of what we eat and what we're exposed to in our environment are carcinogens that are basically there and putting people at greater and greater risk when it comes to contracting the disease of cancer.

There are various types of cancers, as we well know, that are out there, and as far as carcinogens that are out there that can cause cancer. So one of the things that we need to do is to empower our public health units, and I think the medical community generally, to become much more proactive. We've done that to a certain extent, but I don't think we're doing quite as much as we need to in

really trying to promote healthier lifestyles. We have to start at a much earlier age. We have to start in the schools. We have to make sure that children are better aware of what is proper for them to eat, what is healthy for them to eat. We're doing that to a degree, but I think we need to do more. You've got to get to the people who are within the workforce and people who are out there in our society and be much more aggressive as a government when it comes to types of campaigns to give people the idea that, at one point, you do have to get health styles under control. I think that's one of the things we need to emphasize.

It was mentioned on that CBC Radio program last Saturday or Sunday that they have done studies where they've determined that lifestyle is a determining factor, to a certain degree, when it comes to people contracting cancer. If people follow certain habits such as smoking, as an example, obviously they are at much greater risk of contracting cancer. But there are other things as well. They're looking now at a lot of the fast foods that are being consumed, the millions of burgers, at McDonald's and Wendy's and all these other places. They may not be the best thing for you if that becomes a major part of your diet. It doesn't hurt if you have a burger every now and then, but if people—and that's what happens. A lot of us, because of our lifestyles—we're busy, moving, we're always going from one thing to the other, it's eating in restaurants and probably eating what's not good for you. One of the things we need to do is to be much more aggressive in educating and encouraging the public to have a much healthier lifestyle.

It's happening to a degree. In fact, I was talking to Mr.—I should know; I've known him for years. Do you ever get a blank on a name?

Ms. Scott: It's a senior's moment, Gilles.

Mr. Bisson: Yeah, it's a senior's moment. Boy, I don't want to say the name, because I'm going to get it wrong. He's an owner of a Wendy's; they have 10 or 15 Wendy's in northern Ontario. The name is going to come back to me in a second. Anyway, I was chatting with him, and I said, "Is it just my impression that the fast food restaurants are getting much more conscious about offering the consumer salads and better types of food?" He said it is the case. In fact, he said, we're seeing that across North America; however, in northern Ontario less so. That tells us that we need to do some work in being more aggressive in all parts of our province in encouraging people to live healthier lifestyles. That's why I advocate that we need to do it through our public health system.

The other question is the issue of research. I remember thinking this stuff a long time ago and saying, "Well, by the time I get to be 50 or 60 years old, they'll probably have found a cure for cancer." Here we were, spending millions and millions of dollars, all of us contributing. I contributed to the various campaigns around heart and stroke and cancer and the Canadian Cancer Society and others. We always think that in the end there's going to be a great breakthrough, that all of a sudden we're going

to find a cure for cancer and we can take that dreaded disease away, or at least manage a great deal of it. It's a bit discouraging, because here we are, many years later, and we've made progress, but we really haven't made the type of progress that I think we were expecting to. We're still at the point where a number of cancers are very lethal and we know very little about them, and it's a question of just managing the disease in its end stages.

I'm not the expert, but it seems to me that we need to have some sort of a rethinking about how we fund research, a rethinking about how we're able to better organize ourselves so there is maybe a little bit more coordination in research so we're able to concentrate on those things that are closer to being discovered. For example, I was watching a program on public television—it might have been TVOntario or PBS; I forget which one—where they were talking about a new form of chemotherapy. Basically, they're now able to work at the nanocell level, where they create particular types of agents that they put into your body that attach themselves to a cancer, and then they zap you with—it's blue light or black light, some sort of light. It's a very, very directed type of chemotherapy, so that rather than the person being exposed to either radiation therapy or chemotherapy that attacks other cells of the body, this particular technology, which I can't explain because I don't quite understand it, is able to direct itself specifically at a cancer and no other organism within the human body.

I raise that because one of the things we need to look at, not only as a province but as a country and, I would imagine, along with other agencies that do work in the cancer study field, is that we need to start focusing our efforts on some of the things that may make a fairly significant difference on the research side. So (a) we should fund PSA tests—I think it's the right thing to do; and (b) we need to do a lot to encourage people to have healthier lifestyles so as to minimize the risk. But the other thing we have to do is start thinking about where we concentrate our dollars when it comes to the whole issue of research. That's not to say that we shouldn't do research in obscure areas, because that's where some of the biggest discoveries are made, but all I'm suggesting is that maybe we should be trying to focus some of our dollars, our precious resources in the study of cancer, in those areas where we think we're close to moving on discoveries. That's just an impression I have.

The thing I just want to close with is this. The other part of this whole thing is that we need to—unfortunately, there are many people in our society who contract cancer. I know a number of people now in our community, as I'm sure all of us here as MPPs do, where we know people who are being treated for cancer. Some of them will be very successful and will go on to survive the disease; others will not.

1030

One of the specific issues that we have in northern Ontario is the issue of treatment. I know the good member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan would share my view on this, which is that we really need, as a province,

to be a little bit more sensitive about how we deal with the ability of people to travel for treatment. Now, a lot of treatment is done in places like Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sudbury, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, at the major referring hospitals. For example, in the city of Timmins we do chemotherapy and others in order to manage the disease, but at times we need to have people transported to Sudbury or Toronto or even London for treatment, and it is difficult, as the member well knows.

Many people are not with a great amount of money. They're having to travel to, let's say, Sudbury for treatment or for a specialist appointment, and they don't really have the money to do it. The northern travel grant has not been adjusted in many years. The last time the travel grant was adjusted was about 10 or 12 years ago. It seems to me one of the things that we should be doing, especially in the case of—well, it should be in all cases, but specifically in cancer cases, because if I go to see an orthopaedic surgeon in Timmins as a referral from Kapuskasing, it's not life-threatening. It's probably once or twice, and that's about it. There's an examination prior to the surgery, and then the actual surgery that you go into. But people who suffer from cancer often have to travel quite a few times, quite ill, quite sick, to get to some of these appointments that they've got to get to for treatment.

So I would advocate that we need to be able to look at seriously increasing the northern travel grant so that it more closely reflects the actual costs that the individual has to pay in order to get to the appointment, as well as making sure that we cover the costs of the accompanying person, because as you well know, most people can't drive when they've just finished chemotherapy or a particular therapy that they may have had for the treatment of their cancer, and they have to go with somebody in order to make sure they're able to get back to wherever their home community is. So we need to have a northern travel grant that clearly reflects the actual cost that people have to spend when it comes to transporting themselves to and from their appointment. We have to be able to support the cost, as well, of the accompanying person who goes with them.

We've also got to look at accommodation to a degree, because you get it in Thunder Bay as I get it in Timmins, I'm sure, or Kapuskasing or Hearst, where people having to go for a specialist appointment or treatment have to pay a hotel room for one or two or three days. They're at my office saying, "I haven't got the money. I'm sorry. We're working folk. We live from paycheque to paycheque. My husband," or wife or son or daughter, "has contracted cancer. We're going to beg, borrow and steal to get there because we need to do it." It really puts families in very, very difficult positions. So I would hope the government will be serious in looking at the whole issue of the northern travel grant.

The last thing, and I just want to end on this note, my little bit toward public education, is that we should all be in the habit, especially as we get a little bit older in life, to walk into the doctor's office—if you're lucky enough,

in northern Ontario, to have one, as I am—or to walk into the medical clinic and go through an annual checkup every year. It is a lot better for the individual, as far as being able to detect diseases at a much earlier stage. If you have blood pressure problems or there's a PSA test that may indicate that you have prostate cancer or whatever, you have a much better chance of being able to survive whatever disease it is if it's detected earlier.

As well, over the long run it's much better for us as a province, because it means those people who have a real ability to contribute to our society will be with us longer. And in the overall cost to the health care system, it's much better to treat something at an earlier stage from a cost perspective than to treat it over a very long, protracted treatment that eventually ends with death. So it's much better for us if we're able to do that, and I would encourage people to at least once a year go and see their doctors for examinations.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke–Nord): Je demande la parole aujourd'hui pour vous parler d'un sujet qui me tient particulièrement à cœur. La plupart des gens ne savent pas que le cancer de la prostate est le type de cancer le plus fréquemment diagnostiqué chez les hommes au Canada. En moyenne, un nouveau cas de cancer de la prostate est diagnostiqué toutes les deux minutes 30 secondes, et un homme décède des suites de ce cancer toutes les 17 minutes.

En tant que médecin, j'ai constaté directement les effets dévastateurs de ce cancer sur les patients. Je peux dire par expérience que c'est un type de maladie qu'il ne faut pas négliger. En tant que législateur, je peux dire qu'il est nécessaire que chaque homme qui court un risque élevé de développer le cancer de la prostate ait accès au test PSA, antigène prostatique spécifique.

I speak to you in a dual capacity, not only as a man entering the territory in which I should likely get this type of test myself, but also as a family doctor for the past 15 years, as an individual who has published medical articles on this subject, and as well now, of course, as a legislator and the representative of Etobicoke North. I share with all who are listening that medicine, irrespective of its scientific basis, its research and its ever-marching expansion of knowledge, is to this day an imperfect science. Medicine has been called the most scientific art, and the most artistic science. That, of course, is part of the beauty and also the terror of medicine.

Specifically with regard to prostate, what this particular viewpoint highlights is that we need your help. We need not only for the public to be informed about this disease and others, we need not only governments to come forward and fund these types of diagnostic screening preventative measures, but we need to be aware that all our testing, all our education, all the scientific laser focus that even physicians bring to the study of medicine and to the study of prostate cancer is still imperfect. There is still a vast unknown of quantities that we cannot put our finger on. That's why we need to be assisted in

our efforts to diagnose, screen and prevent deaths due to this type of disease.

If you've ever met an individual who has not only had prostate cancer but has suffered from what's called metastatic prostate cancer—that is, of course, a cancer that has left home, that has left its primary location and spread elsewhere, most often to the spine, say, the bones of the spine—that is a disease that is on the increase, meaning metastatic, terminal-level cancer of the prostate, and it's a tragedy, because any physician who meets such a patient knows that it is entirely preventable.

As my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan very appropriately said, it's not only the base level, the number that you get back on your test; it's also the velocity or the speed of the change, which we would be able to measure on a yearly basis if you allow us to do the test and you fund it, which is a very important indicator for potential development of cancer. That's why we should not, as a government in Ontario, continue to offer this slight little barrier of not covering under the Ontario health insurance plan the \$25 or so that it costs to do this test.

Colleagues of mine here have also spoken eloquently about the need for prevention. That is very, very true. This is a particular case of a disease which absolutely, in 100% of cases, would likely be prevented not only with the use of this particular blood test, but also the other modalities, including a history, a physical examination, possibly a pelvic ultrasound, and so on. Of course, there's a whole protocol to the management of prostate cancer.

What I would like to share with you in closing is that unfortunately, first of all, cancer in general—all cancers—has now become the number one killer in North America. This is occurring now for the first time, overtaking heart disease and cardiovascular causes for the first time. Prostate cancer is very much a part of that.

I quote the senior Dr. M. K. Qadri, who happens to be my mother as well as a gynaecologist, who said to me yesterday, "If women's pap smear tests are covered by OHIP, then why are men's prostate cancer tests not covered by OHIP?" I have no answer for her.

1040

But I hope, Speaker, with your support, and with the support of members of this Legislature, to be able to report back to her that we in the government, forward-looking, making use of the best practices and being fully aware of the march of medical science as well as the art of medicine, have actually begun to cover this particular test.

As my colleague from the NDP said very clearly, we as doctors need to get in all the citizens of Ontario, on a reasonably regular basis, for screening tests of various kinds, whether it's blood pressure, sugar, cholesterol or, certainly for men over the age of 50, the PSA test.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in support of my member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan on this very important subject. I suspect that many of the younger male mem-

bers don't really think too much about PSA tests and prostate cancer, and I guess I don't blame them. I can tell you, though, that when you get older, these things start weighing on your mind.

My brother Frank died from prostate cancer when he was only 57. If he had been tested early, he would probably be alive today. This disease is curable, but the reluctance to have the test is out there.

When you hear statistics that say that one in seven men is expected to develop this potentially deadly disease in their lifetime and that 1,300 men will die this year because of this disease, it makes you stop and think.

Of course, knowing that there's a test that can detect prostate cancer before it becomes lethal gives men a sense of security. At least we can all go to the doctor and have a checkup, but that test will cost you \$25. It seems that if it's done in a hospital and is recommended by a doctor, it's free. Now, that seems to me a ridiculous set-up.

I don't think that anyone would say that \$25 is too much to spend when it could potentially save a life. I think people would say that such an important test should be covered, like other tests, under OHIP. It seems logical that if a test can detect prostate cancer early enough to treat it, all men should be having this test and OHIP should be covering it.

I understand that there are arguments that say this test should not be covered. One of the most common arguments is that the test can return false positive indications of cancer, which in turn causes undue stress on patients. That happened to me two weeks ago, so I know what that is like. But if a positive result is reported, that result can be confirmed through other means: additional testing procedures. That was the case with me. I got the good news yesterday when I went to my doctor just on Bay Street. It's very personal to me. Given the options, we should be including that test as an insured test.

Some people have argued about the high cost of covering the test under OHIP, but evidence points to the contrary. A study conducted in 2000 showed that there would actually be a saving of \$24 million to the government if the tests were covered. Right now, it costs \$16,000 for a radical prostatectomy to cure diagnosed prostate cancer before it has spread. To treat a patient after it spreads costs \$32,000, but probably a lot more than that when it moves, as was described by Dr. Qaadri.

I believe that one of the best aspects of this bill is that it would make the choice to get tested easier for all men. A \$25 fee for a test does not sound unreasonable, but it certainly can be a deterrent, and it is a deterrent. I think that should be remedied by this bill, and remedied as quickly as we can. It would remove some of the hesitation the doctors probably have to suggest the test to people.

The majority of doctors support insuring this test. I don't have enough time to list all the medical groups that believe this test would help save lives, but they've all been supportive.

Our government has made great strides toward ensuring that Ontarians get the health care they need.

Whether it be through reduced waiting times for major procedures, introducing family health teams and making sure that people get the care they need close to home, our government is working to provide the best health care to all Ontarians. After many years of neglect, we are giving our health care system the boost it needs.

This bill is in line with the goals of our health care transformation. I believe it would complement our government's efforts and make a great addition to the host of improvements we are making to health care.

Simply put, PSA tests save lives, PSA tests save money, and PSA tests are recommended by doctors.

I appreciate having been given this time to speak on this very important bill and urge all members to support it.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for the opportunity to speak for a few moments on this bill, which is certainly supportable, Bill 201, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act, so that PSA testing is covered by OHIP.

It's a very straightforward concept. I think even the pages in this room today would understand it. As a child growing up, my father always said to me, "Make sure you brush your teeth." I often used to question, "Why do I have to brush my teeth every night and then every morning?" The reason became clear years later that it was prevention. You brush your teeth when you're young and you brush them regularly, and that way you prevent getting tooth disease or cavities. In the same sort of sense, we're doing the same thing here. We're providing for prevention of potential disease, or at least catching that disease at an early stage: prostate cancer.

It makes a lot of sense to support this. The way it has been brought forward is straightforward. Dr. Qaadri spoke to the issue of how this is allowed for with women's pap smear testing, and this would be something fair and equitable, to allow treatment for men who potentially could catch this form of cancer.

I introduced a private member's bill about two months ago that had to do with gender-based pricing and making sure that men and women were charged equally for things like dry cleaning, haircuts and other items, for the same amount of work that was being done. I was questioned by some critics, who said to me, "Well, you're defending women's rights and not men's rights here. You're trying to help women out by giving them dry cleaning costs that are better or cheaper haircuts or making sure that alterations on their suits are covered the same as they are for men. What are you doing for men?" My answer then was the same as my answer today: That bill was about equality and doing what was fair, just and right, and this bill is the same. It's doing what's fair, just and right. It's not a matter of whether you're doing something for men or for women, but it's doing what's fair and what's right. Having this procedure covered by OHIP is fair, equitable and right. It allows for prevention. It allows for future cost savings.

I always remember a commercial that I used to see years ago on television about an oil filter. This mechanic

would come out and say, "Once again, this car engine has broken down, and the reason is that the person who owned this car didn't change the filter." I don't know if it was an air filter or an oil filter, but it was a filter. The mechanic would say, "If you change the filter regularly and maintain it properly, then you won't have a broken engine years down the line. So you can pay me now"—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "Pay me now or pay me later."

Mr. Berardinetti:—"or you can pay me later," as the member from Peterborough has pointed out.

In the same sense, the small expense of covering this test here, like a pap test, is a way of saying, "Pay me now instead of paying me later." The expense now of having the tests done are much lower than the costs later, the tens of thousands of dollars of having to go through surgery or radical treatment to deal with prostate cancer, which is such a hard-hitting and growing form of cancer in Ontario and throughout the world.

I certainly am supportive of this bill and hope it goes to second reading and eventually becomes law.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to join in the debate. I want to let the member know that I will certainly be supporting this bill, and on canvassing my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus, I can also confirm that he will have their support on this bill.

I want at the outset to commend my colleague Joseph Tascona, from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who presented a very similar resolution to the Legislature on December 7, 2000. At that point in time, it was supported unanimously by the Legislature. Unfortunately, it was never implemented, and the government of the day, I regret to say, did not follow through on the wishes of the private member's hour.

1050

I want to frame the rest of my remarks with a letter that is dated April 8, 2005. It was from the Retired Teachers of Ontario, and it's addressed to Dalton McGuinty, the Premier. It reads as follows:

"On behalf of the political action committee of the Retired Teachers of Ontario, we are seeking an update on the position of your government related to the funding of the ... PSA test.

"In November 2002, in your then role as opposition leader, you responded to a similar inquiry ... with the following statement: 'In light of the fact that physicians are ordering the test because they view it as a medical necessity, the Ontario Liberals believe it should be made available to patients free of charge.'

"As it has been almost a year and a half since your government was formed, our political action committee is anxious to know when you plan to make the PSA test available, free of charge, so we may share this information with our 55,000 members. We hasten to point out that this is indeed a gender equity matter."

The Premier has made the commitment. It is a promise of the Premier. It is unfortunate that some two years later now, it takes a private member's bill to remind the Premier of his promise to in fact make this important test

free of charge, available through OHIP. The Premier is clearly on record as saying that's what he'll do. I fully expect that this bill will be passed today. I fully expect that the Premier will be reminded, and I fully expect that we will hear the Minister of Health stand in his place and make this important announcement to ensure without further delay that this matter is resolved once and for all.

I want to point out that not only is the Premier in support of this, but certainly members of the current cabinet and others who are now the government who have the opportunity to make this decision are clearly on the record as supporting this. I want to read into the record comments by Mr. Jim Bradley from St. Catharines. This was in the course of debate on Mr. Tascona's resolution in December 2000:

"I am going to be speaking in favour and voting in favour of the resolution today. I'm going to deal primarily with what is in provincial jurisdiction, as I believe we very often and unwisely spend a lot of time dealing with the federal jurisdiction." He goes on to say, "I want to deal with the test itself. I raised this issue about the PSA test in a question to the minister on December 17, 1998. I happen to believe the PSA test should be available to men who wish to have that test, at no cost—it's as simple as that, in my view—just as other tests are available for other reasons."

That question, that the current Minister Bradley referred to, was indeed put to the then Minister of Health. I quote the December 17, 1998, Hansard. He says to the minister, "Why is it that this government is forcing men in this province to pay for the PSA test, which could prevent them from getting cancer or detecting cancer early?" The minister referred in her response to the fact that unfortunately, it's not a political decision, that there are others within government who make that decision. Well, I hear from the Premier, and I know from the confirmation that I'm hearing from members of the Liberal caucus today—they would not have brought this forward without consultation with the Premier and with ministers on the front bench—that they are giving us a great deal of confidence today to know that when this bill is passed, we will see the minister stand and make this important announcement that PSA tests from this point forward will in fact be covered by OHIP.

I received a number of e-mails just recently from my constituents as well. I want to read into the record a letter from my constituent Mr. George Butcher of Richmond Hill. He writes, "Thanks to regular (annual) PSA testing I am alive today. What if I chose not to pay the \$20, or if my doctor had not chosen to support this testing? I consider myself lucky that I could afford to pay for these tests and that my doctor sees the light. Those that can't or won't pay the \$20 are costing the province, you and I, millions of dollars in medical treatment, not to mention their lives, that might have been avoided. Please support the inclusion of the cost of this testing in the Ontario medical coverage.

"Thank you.

"George Butcher"

To him, I say that I certainly am supporting this resolution today and will support and applaud the government for doing so.

Another letter I received is from Mr. J.E. DeToro of Richmond Hill. He writes, "I am very concerned that the cost of PSA testing in a doctor's office or testing lab for men who have not been diagnosed with prostate cancer is not covered for several reasons. The cost could be a factor for many men. In addition, the fact that OHIP does not cover the test implies that it is not useful or valid. Finally, the cost is covered when the test is carried out at a hospital, but this could make some men less likely to have it performed because of the added inconvenience." He goes on to encourage this government to proceed with ensuring that the PSA test is indeed covered by OHIP.

I want to say very clearly that this is an opportune time for the government to act. There is now before us this private member's bill, and I encourage all members of the Legislature to demonstrate unanimously their support for this initiative.

I thank those who have been lobbying over the years and who have not given up on this issue. It is very clearly something that needs to be done. There may be immediate short-term costs, but as we've heard in debate today, what we invest today in this test will save multi-millions of dollars in future health care costs in this province, and for that reason, I am pleased to add my support to this.

In closing, I want to just say to you that I'm pleased to have with us today in the gallery students from St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School in Richmond Hill. It's their opportunity to observe procedures in the Legislature and to see first-hand how important decisions are made in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Mauro, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mauro: I'd like to thank my colleagues who have spoken today on behalf of this legislation: the members from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Timmins–James Bay, Etobicoke North, Ottawa–Orléans, Scarborough South-west, and Oak Ridges.

This is my first private member's bill here in the Legislature. It's not a decision that I took lightly, in terms of what it was that I would bring forward. I thought about three or four potential ideas and settled on this one, as I've said, not lightly.

There are, depending on who you speak to, cost implications associated with this. There are arguments that would suggest there are cost savings that would accrue to the government should we begin funding the test. But like many of the other members in this Legislative Assembly, I have a regular stream of visitors who visit me on health care issues in my constituency offices in Thunder Bay and Atikokan. This is only one of a myriad of issues that we have to deal with. Part of what I talk to these people about is the fact that there are a whole range of things that we do not fund, as a government and as a province—people think that under our OHIP plan, we pay for everything—and I list for them the things that we

do not pay for. This is one of them. We talk to them about the fact that our health care system in this province takes up anywhere from 40% to 50% of our total provincial budget and continues to rise. The pressures on our health care system are incredible.

Having said all that and having digested all of that, I still feel that this test is necessary, and we need to find room within our health care system to fund it. Our agenda in health care is about transforming what's going on. It's about prevention. It's about refocusing in areas where we can make long-term improvements. For that reason, I feel that this is an appropriate test and that we should fund it.

I thank all who have spoken on behalf of it. I appreciate your support.

1100

RURAL ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ONTARIO RURAL

Mrs. Mitchell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to celebrate and recognize rural Ontario / Projet de loi 199, Loi visant à célébrer et à reconnaître l'Ontario rural.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Mitchell has moved ballot item number 74. Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): Members of the House know, as do you, Mr. Speaker, that I represent the most rural riding in the province of Ontario, so I know first-hand what it is like to live, work and raise a family in a rural area. I'm very proud of our rural communities. Rural Ontario is the key to the health and vitality of our province, and this bill will recognize rural Ontario's strengths: hard-working people, various economic opportunities, beautiful natural resources and a solid sense of community.

As we approach June 21, the day to be named Rural Ontario Day, I wish to outline the purpose of the bill. This will be a day when we reflect on the contribution rural Ontario has made to our province and to highlight its great potential.

The people of the First Nations opened the vast forests of Ontario. They were the pioneers who began to unveil the riches of the land. Their trio of crops—corn, beans and squash—were the first steps to not depending on hunting and fishing. Their technology had its limitations, and it was not until the Europeans decided to settle that the rural area started to open up. They were French settlers along the St. Clair River and then the influx of the Loyalists. The history of Upper Canada is the history of rural Ontario.

Our communities became strong as we faced and overcame the obstacles which geography created. Group action and innovation were the hallmarks. Working together for the common good is the thread that runs

through rural Ontario. Rapid advances in technology made the land more productive and made transportation economical. In the 19th century, towns and villages sprouted across the land.

But progress was the word. Business followed the settlers, and manufacturers emerged to meet local demands. Schools and churches were built at almost every concession crossroad. If you look at the dates on the buildings in our small towns and villages, you will note the date of construction. The early 20th century was the time when rural confidence manifested itself in very impressive local structures. Main Street in many smaller towns has many architectural gems from this time. The buildings showed a sense of achievement and confidence in the future. This period ended, and the solemn cenotaphs in many of our communities mark the contribution of the rural youth in the war to end all wars.

The 20th century has seen great changes in our rural countryside worldwide. Again, it is technology that has triggered the changes. The population has shifted from a province where most of the population lived in rural areas to the present where most of the population lives in cities. In the 20th century, the population began to shift from the rural areas to the city. Technology was a major factor in making the urban areas more important economically. Since the beginning, there was always a gulf between the urban and rural areas, but technology has changed this. Just as the first railways, the highways brought produce and they brought people to the cities. Now technology has reversed that flow and, as the world becomes global, first radio, then television, electricity and now the Internet, they have reduced the distance and the differences between our urban and rural communities.

That brings us to today. Throughout the past years, many things have thrived in rural Ontario. Our rural people, when ignored by the big financial institutions, have turned to themselves to create solutions. They have invested in their own innovation. Credit unions, mutual insurance companies, independent phone companies—that's our rural Ontario. As well, I would like to highlight our unique health services.

As you know, most people in rural areas have to travel a great distance to get to a hospital or a health care provider. This circumstance is something for our people to overcome. Many community groups have gathered together to offer more modern services much more efficiently.

Many of our rural schools also face unique challenges. Low enrolment and threats of school closures hang over their heads. As well, busing expenses are high because of the large geographical area they need to cover, but, I must say, in small, rural schools, the families and the teachers work together to form a community.

I also want to mention the beautiful landscape and green space rural Ontario has to offer: lakes, rivers, forests full of trees and wildlife, fields full of fresh produce, provincial parks and farmland. Many people from urban centres travel to our rural areas, especially to view the beautiful landscapes that rural Ontario has to

offer: hiking trails, sunny beaches, hunting, boating and fishing. The land remains our most important influence and factor in our rural areas. Technology may change the means of making a living off the land, but the land is the essence of our rural way of life. It is the bond with the land that makes rural life that much different. Even if one does not earn one's living directly from the land, its importance is always felt in our hearts.

This brings me to the summer months. Many exciting things happen in rural Ontario during warm weather months: live theatre, fairs, festivals, concerts, just to name a few. Many people take advantage of attending these events and always leave with a smile on their face.

As I end my introduction, I would really like to recognize and highlight the strong sense of community small towns and rural communities thrive on, as well as the many wonderful volunteers who are committed to maintaining the high quality of life we all enjoy. There are many organizations that are formed, mainly to strengthen the voice of rural Ontario. Rural Ontario has many committed people, diverse economic opportunities, plenty of natural resources and a thriving sense of community. Rural communities contribute to a high quality of life for all of Ontario.

Through my private member's bill, I would like to declare June 21 as Rural Ontario Day. This date marks the beginning of the summer solstice and the first day of summer. Rural Ontario comes alive during the summer months. Thus, I thought it was an appropriate day to recognize all of the great accomplishments and potential growth that rural Ontario has to offer.

I would like to just read a short note that was sent to me by one of my colleagues, the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh:

“Congratulations on your work to declare June 21 as Rural Ontario Day, through your private member's bill, Bill 199.

“I too believe that it is important to celebrate the rich history, the current endeavours and the future growth of rural Ontario. You are right on the mark with this initiative.

“Unfortunately, I have to be in the riding ... and will not be here to support you and the bill in person. I wish you well and I appreciate all your efforts and words of support for rural Ontario.”

I have also received letters of support from the Ontario Rural Council and Black Creek Pioneer Village. I also want to bring to your attention that June 21 is National Aboriginal Day in Canada.

The Rural Ontario Day Act, 2005 will help protect and recognize rural values and culture. This day will recognize those who have made a commitment to strong rural communities. It will highlight the rural way of life and reflect on its unique attributes. It is important to celebrate the rich history, current endeavours and the future growth of rural Ontario. The passing of this bill will demonstrate Ontario's recognition of rural Ontario.

At the beginning of this speech I spoke of the potential of our rural areas. We can combine the latest in new

technology with the benefits of rural living and create a quality of life that is second to none. The importance of this bill is to make all of us aware of our rural roots and how they will continue to be a major factor in the well-being of all of Ontario.

I am very proud to represent rural Ontario and I hope that my colleagues will support me in recognizing Rural Ontario Day, that day being June 21.

1110

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 199, introduced in the name of the member from Huron–Bruce. I want to say that I much appreciate this opportunity to support the recognition of rural Ontario as a part of our economy.

In 1952—this goes back a fair ways—my father decided that the possibilities and the future of agriculture in the Netherlands were not sufficient to be able to raise his family and live the rural lifestyle that he had there at that time. It was different than it was here; it was an issue of there not being enough room for the population to stay living in the lifestyle of a rural community, so he came here. Now, of course, things have changed. At that time, there was not enough coming out of agriculture to sustain a family, with the input costs and the cost of land. Since then, of course, it has changed. It's one of the highest-subsidized countries in the world when it comes to agriculture. At that time, when he came in 1952, there was no support here in Ontario, but then again there was no support needed here in Ontario. Times have changed since then. I'm still glad that he came to Ontario and to Canada, because that's why I'm here today. But again, when you look at what's happening in agriculture, I'm sure that the people who are in agriculture today would look at the problems here as being similar to the problems that were there in 1952.

Also, it's a pleasure and a privilege to be here to represent the great riding of Oxford county. I just want to point out that Oxford county is the second-highest agriculture-producing county in Ontario, second only to the county of Huron, represented by the member who has introduced this bill. Of course, we will keep pushing to try to produce more than Huron county, because we're always wanting to be number one. That's a trait of rural Ontario, that we all strive to do better.

The farmers have spent a very testing, shall we say, winter, as the commodity prices stayed down and with other problems they had. Then the sun came out and it was time to go to the fields. I go to the farmers now and everybody is forgetting about their problems and getting enthused because they are back out in the fields, feeling like this is going to be the best year ever, even though all signs would suggest that that's not likely to happen.

As I said, I live in and represent the rural riding of Oxford. For the first time since industrialization began in Ontario, more people are moving out of the cities than into the cities. At the same time, the introduction of highly mechanized farms means that less than 3% of Ontario's residents are directly involved in farming. According to statistics, fully 25% of rural residents are

now people who have moved from urban areas to enjoy the lifestyle that rural Ontario has to offer. Expanding technologies such as fibre optics and the Internet are providing new opportunities for workers to communicate from rural communities. No longer do people have to live in big cities in order to support their families.

I'm glad the member opposite wants everyone to recognize the importance of rural Ontario and its contributions to our economy. Obviously, Ontario is not just agriculture; it's a lot of other rural residents. But I do hope the government will recognize the importance of agriculture to rural Ontario the other 364 days of the year, not only on June 21.

As I said yesterday, when I spoke on John Tory's motion asking all members of the House to recognize and endorse the fiscal and social value of Ontario's agricultural industry and the rural way of life that surrounds it, I don't believe the McGuinty Liberals understand nor support the rural way of life. The best way to support rural Ontario is to support agriculture and make it sustainable. In May 2004, the Liberal government saw fit to remove \$128 million from the Ministry of Agriculture's budget. It was the biggest cut of any ministry, over 20% of their budget. Again this year, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food had its budget cut by 23.1%. Is this a government that supports agriculture in rural Ontario? I don't think so.

Let's take a moment to review this. Instead of making agriculture a lead ministry as promised in the Liberal election platform, they not only reduced the ministry's budget but cut important funding programs that farmers desperately need. During the election, Dalton McGuinty promised to work with farmers and the federal government to ensure a viable new generation of safety nets and to develop a new research strategy for Ontario's agriculture. But instead, the 2004 budget delivered a \$50-million cut to safety net programs and slashed almost half a million dollars out of research and technology funding.

Here we are today with the same story as last year. The new CAIS program does not work without companion programs, and they were phased out in the agricultural policy framework. And of course there is no money in the budget to fund those programs next year.

No one in the McGuinty government seems to be listening to the farmers. Sad to say, the situation hasn't changed. Farmers are in crisis. The Minister of Agriculture has no plan—no short-term plan and no long-term plan—only the promise, again, to study the situation.

It's important that the government develop a plan to ensure that rural Ontario communities thrive. We have to ensure that more health care professionals and services are available, that people are well educated, that young people can find close to home what they need for their future—skills training, access to higher education, apprenticeship programs and well-paying work—so they can make acceptable lives for themselves in rural communities. I've said to all who will listen that we need to recognize that rural Ontario is the key to the health and viability of this province, and not only on June 21. But this bill will help to do that.

Our rural communities contribute to a high quality of life for all of us. The success Ontario enjoys today as the economic engine of the country is greatly owed to the strengths of our rich agriculture, forestry, mining and manufacturing sectors. In fact, many auto parts manufacturers and their suppliers are located in rural Ontario. There's one large assembly plant located right in the second-highest agriculture-producing riding in the province of Ontario, Oxford county.

Municipalities recognize the importance of rural Ontario, and through the Rural Ontario Municipal Association have for decades ensured that matters which affect rural communities are brought to the attention of the provincial and federal governments. During my time as a municipal politician, I had the pleasure of being the chair of that organization. The issues that ROMA monitors on behalf of agriculture and rural communities include extensive livestock operations, nutrient management, rural schools, commodity prices, farm taxation, economic development, roads, bridges and infrastructure, and ambulance services in Ontario. If municipalities, through ROMA, can recognize the importance of the role agriculture and rural Ontario play in the economic viability of the province and can bring it to the province, it's hard to believe the answer to their concerns is budget cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture.

I have concerns with what the Liberal government is doing to agriculture, and I once again speak to the issues I raised yesterday, issues such as the very serious ones hurting beef farmers, who are still suffering from the 2003 BSE crisis. The borders are still closed to live cattle. Beef and dairy farmers are suffering extreme financial hardship. Spinoff industries, processing industries and whole communities are still suffering. But the minister thinks funding can be reduced.

There were reasons why our government did not sign the agricultural policy framework as it stood. It was not good for Ontario's farmers. The minister signed it without any changes, only promises to review it in a year, with no commitment from the federal government to help fund the companion programs that are needed.

The Minister of Agriculture is quoted in Hansard on November 23, 2004, as stating, and I will say it once again, "As you know, Ontario's agricultural sector is the most diverse in the country of Canada, and these companion programs play an important role in addressing the unique needs of this province's agricultural industry. Securing the continuation of these programs over the short term is a key element in moving us closer to our vision of a strong and sustainable agricultural sector." Obviously this is not happening, as there is no money in the budget to cover the cost of putting those companion programs in this year. The Minister of Finance obviously didn't agree that companion programs are important to farmers; the recent budget, as I said, doesn't include any funding for them.

With massive cuts to the budget, the ministry will no longer be able to sustain the support which was invaluable to the farmers of this province. The minister will

deny the reductions, but we only have to look on page 29 of the budget, where the Minister of Finance cut agriculture by 23.1%. I ask again, when is the Minister of Agriculture going to admit that he's at the mercy of his urban colleagues?

1120

Having said all that, I do want to support the member from Huron-Bruce in her endeavours to recognize rural Ontario, but I have to say once again that I support rural Ontario and agricultural communities for 365 days of the year; one day is not enough. I hope that your Liberal colleagues who support June 21 as a special day for agriculture will put the pressure on the government to recognize it, as I do, 365 days of the year. So again, we thank you very much for introducing this bill, and I can assure you, I will be supporting it.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased, as a member of the New Democratic Party caucus, to speak to this bill this morning. I want you to know that Mrs. Mitchell has the support of the New Democrats in her pursuit of June 21 as Rural Ontario Day. I say to you as well that Mrs. Mitchell has demonstrated herself to be a capable voice for rural Ontario, for agriculture. She is joined by colleagues within her own caucus for whom I also have regard, people like Maria Van Bommel, who I know to be the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I not only know her to be the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, but as the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I know her to be another passionate voice for rural Ontario and for hard-working women and men and their families—inevitably their families—working in agriculture.

My riding down in Niagara Centre is a mixed riding of small-town Ontario and very much rural and agricultural Ontario, and I think it's important to highlight the needs, because rural Ontario has some very, very special needs—needs that are becoming increasingly desperate because the clock is ticking and, if I dare say it, ticking at a furious pace for people in rural Ontario.

There's the rural Ontario of southern Ontario and then there's the rural Ontario of the north, of the ridings in places like Timmins-James Bay and Kenora-Rainy River: Kenora-Rainy River, a rural riding, make no mistake about it, larger than the country of France; Timmins-James Bay, a rural riding, make no mistake about it, with communities so isolated that one's only access to them is either on the icy shores of James Bay and Hudson Bay in the wintertime or by charter flight. I don't have to tell anyone in this chamber—I certainly hope I don't have to tell anyone—about the desperation and the tragedy of the unmet needs of communities like Peawanuck and Attawapiskat, those very remote communities, those native aboriginal communities, in that very rural far north riding of Timmins-James Bay, among others.

So rural Ontario is not an homogenous thing, and it's not a simple thing. It's a very complex thing and, again, there are many rural Ontarios in Ontario. One of the pressures that I'm well aware of where I come from

down in Niagara is the tension between urban areas and rural areas. One of the struggles that we in Niagara have fought for many years, and continue to fight, I tell you, is the effort to preserve agricultural land. One of the dilemmas is that it is the farmer who is the most capable steward and preservationist when it comes to agricultural land, but the farmer is being undermined on a daily basis. How much longer can we expect the farmer and her or his family to subsidize our food, to subsidize the contribution to the environment, to cleaner air and cleaner water, that agricultural and undeveloped land create? It's not a matter of how much longer we can expect them to subsidize it or call upon them to subsidize it; it's a matter of how much longer they can afford to subsidize it. The capacity of that farmer and her or his family to subsidize urban Ontario is no more.

Yet we condemn the farmer and put hurdles in front of that farmer who would dare to suggest that maybe—the severance of a small piece of land to enable them to live out their retirement years is not to be permitted by virtue of the arbitrary greenbelting of Ontario? Nobody disputes or disagrees with the concept of greenbelting, but I'll use Niagara and the instance of grape growers for as good an example as any about how there are other ways that are far more effective than legislated greenbelts.

Let me put this to you: I had occasion to tell you yesterday in this chamber, and you may or may not know it, Speaker, that Ontario wine, wine in our LCBO stores called Ontario wine, more often than not has not just 10% or 20% foreign content, but over 50% to 60% foreign content. It's cheap plonk that's being shipped in from South America, where the standards around pesticide use are virtually non-existent—so we should be fearful about what we're ingesting when we drink this stuff—where the conditions for workers are far less regulated, if regulated at all, and where the shipping of this juice, by ocean-going ships from Chile to Toronto harbour, gives more than sufficient opportunity for that grape juice to be corrupted in so many ways.

Yet the government will not act on this simple proposition. It won't cost the taxpayers a cent. The government won't have to reach into its revenues, its budgetary situation, to merely say that any wine that's called Ontario wine has to be 100% Ontario wine; not 80%, not 90%; but 100% Ontario wine, Ontario juice, Ontario grape. That move, in and of itself, would bolster grape growers, not only in Niagara but down where you come from as well and across this province, and put them back in a situation where they are making a little bit of profit, a little bit of real income, net income, on their grape-growing operation. It is a fraud on the public to mislead them into believing that something is an Ontario product when it can be as much as 70%, and in some cases even more, foreign product in its content. Grape growers could be given an incredible respite from the pressures on them.

As I say, requiring that Ontario wine be 100% Ontario grape and 100% Ontario juice will do more to sustain the scarce, valuable agricultural land that these vineyards are

on than any legislative move this government or any other government could ever develop.

I know that the author of this bill, Ms. Mitchell from Huron-Bruce, would support that proposition. I know she would lobby her colleagues to support that proposition.

1130

My concern is that the Premier's office—Mr. McGuinty and his gang of minions—thinks that the province of Ontario begins and ends at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor and has no real understanding not only of what rural Ontario is but even where it is, and not only where it is, has no understanding of what its needs are and how desperate those needs are—because they are desperate. There's an urgency to this. While I applaud Ms. Mitchell for understanding that, I condemn the Premier for turning his back on rural Ontario, on agricultural Ontario.

Reference, I'm sure, has been made already this morning—I know it's been made because I sat here listening to the comments by Mr. Hardeman from the riding of Oxford when he referred to that now-notorious page 29 of Ontario's most recent budget papers. Page 29 is the top 15 list. It's Dalton McGuinty's top 15. It's his top 15 list of ministries that have been cut, slashed in terms of funding. And number one on the list, at the very top of the list, first and foremost, the ministry with the largest single cut across the board, make no mistake about it, is none other than the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The government, in its budget papers, page 29, actually has the chutzpah to brag about it, to say, "Look how we're slashing costs": Ministry of Agriculture and Food by 23%. Top of the list.

That is an incredible insult, it's an incredible assault on rural Ontario and on those farmers and their families who work so hard, who work such long hours, who have such incredible commitment to feeding the people of Ontario and Canada and to sustaining the second-largest single industry in this province. It is, isn't it, in terms of its economic activity?

You know what, with this government's lack of concern for the future of, amongst others, General Motors employees in places like St. Catharines and its lacklustre participation—well, "less than stellar" is generous; its lack of participation in and support for the aerospace industry—and we saw what that did to us a couple of weeks ago, didn't we? Major production leaving Ontario and going to Quebec. From the period of 1995 to 2005, the last 10 years, the Niagara region has lost 10,000 manufacturing jobs. So we'd better be darned careful about agriculture, because if agriculture currently is number two in the economy, it could well become number one in short order, by default. That's not to say that California isn't prepared to feed Ontarians or that South America isn't prepared to feed Ontarians, whether it's with fruit or vegetables or chickens or other forms of poultry, other forms of meat product. Sure they are. But once you relinquish your ability to feed yourself, I say that is the most significant attack on sovereignty that could ever be performed.

I know that rural Ontario isn't just about agriculture, but agriculture is all about rural Ontario. So I applaud the sentiment but I abhor the "Oh, I feel your pain" aspect to merely saluting rural Ontario. I join others in this chamber who have already spoken to this bill and made it very clear that if we are to celebrate rural Ontario, it's not just about passing the bill and making June 21, the solstice, a provincial holiday. I'm wondering, should this bill go to committee, if Ms. Mitchell would consider making it a statutory holiday. That way—think about it—workers across Ontario can have the opportunity to spend time with their families, travelling to rural Ontario, taking a look at what's really going on.

Ms. Mitchell, you're on to something. Not only should June 21 be a day celebrating rural Ontario, it should be a statutory holiday. Lord knows, workers in this province, working harder and longer than they ever have before, need one. You would have earned yourself so many friends in so many places here in the province of Ontario.

I look forward to the chance to vote for this bill.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's indeed a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to get a few remarks on the record with regard to second reading of Bill 199, An Act to celebrate and recognize rural Ontario.

Just to start off, I was pleased last April to get a resolution through the House that was passed unanimously to support that MPPs go back to the farm once a year, and I look forward to having my second tour this September to visit a number of farms in the riding of Peterborough, which is a riding that basically has a 60-40 split: 60% urban and 40% rural. It's always great to get back and spend a day on the farm with a number of the farmers in my area.

But it is important to celebrate the history of the farm community. When you go back to the First World War, the bulk of individuals who joined the Canadian army in the First World War were individuals who came from farms. I know, for example, that in my riding there's a small community of Keene, Ontario, in the municipality of Otonabee-South Monaghan township. When you go to the war memorial in Keene and look at the individuals who made the supreme sacrifice during the First World War or certainly that generation of young farmers who went to France, fought in the trenches over there and didn't come back to Canada, it really was that first young generation of farmers. I think the people of Ontario have to be reminded about that sacrifice during the first Great War.

Also in the riding of Peterborough, we had the discovery of Red Fife wheat. David Fife, who came from western Canada to settle in Otonabee township, developed a strain of wheat, Red Fife wheat, that was particularly adaptable to the soil and climate conditions of east central Ontario.

As I'm touring through my riding, I still see a number of signs of farm families who were indeed century farmers in 1967. One of the initiatives during Canada's centennial in that year was to go through and especially

designate those farms that were there for over 100 years. Many of those family farms are still in existence and still proudly display that century farm marker in front of their operations.

I also look at the Stewart family, who came from Chicago at the turn of the 20th century to establish Quaker Oats in the riding of Peterborough. It's now part of the Pepsi-Cola business empire, but it was originally those Stewarts who came from Chicago to Peterborough to establish Quaker Oats in 1902. The principal reason they came to Peterborough in 1902, as I previously mentioned, was the development of Red Fife wheat. Many of the farmers in the Peterborough area were raising and harvesting Red Fife wheat that went directly to Quaker Oats and that was used in the manufacture of those world-renowned cereal products that many of us still use today—employing some 600 individuals in the riding of Peterborough.

You also look to the riding of my good friend from Port Hope. Port Hope was the residence of the Massey family. We know of course that Vincent Massey became the first native-born Canadian Governor General, but the other branch of his family joined with the Ferguson family to become a world leader in the manufacture of combines and tractors. At one time, Massey Ferguson had manufacturing facilities through all the continents of the world. They were the world leader in innovation and providing that kind of equipment.

1140

We think of John Kenneth Galbraith, who was born in a little community outside of Guelph, Ontario called Iona Station. John Kenneth Galbraith got his first degree in agricultural economics from the University of Guelph, and then he went on to have a tremendous public sector career in the United States as a key adviser to many administrations.

The other thing I'd like to touch upon is certainly supply management. My colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has been very active in signing up members from this Legislature to support the notion of supply management. I think one of the things that we have to do is explain to our consumers in Ontario the value of supply management. If you think about it for a moment, when you go to one of the convenience outlet stores in your riding or my riding or other members' ridings and you see that three bags of milk gets sold for \$4.20, that's great value, and it's all due to supply management and the ability to provide farmers a reasonable rate of return and to guarantee consumers in this province supply and quantity. Many of our urban counterparts think supply management somehow jacks up the price of those commodities that are controlled by supply management.

I think it's important for us and the member from Huron-Bruce, having June 21 as Rural Ontario Day, to take the opportunity to explain what value there is in how we manage our rural system in Ontario, the farm products we produce. It's something we can all be very proud of.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): First of all, I just want to extend my thanks to the member for Huron–Bruce for coming forward with this bill. You take certain things for granted, and when I first saw it, I thought, why have we waited so long? Why have we not had a day to celebrate rural Ontario? We have so many other things that we celebrate, and we have designated days for those kinds of things. We hadn't done this before, and I was actually really surprised. Then I thought, well, that's very much the way that the rural communities are. The member from Oxford talked about it being a 365-day sort of thing, and he's right. We all do our thing in rural communities 365 days of the year. But then I thought about it a little further and I thought, well, we've got Father's Day coming up, and fathers are fathers 365 days of the year too—

Interjection: Or more.

Mrs. Van Bommel: —or more, for years and years and years, and we celebrate that on a certain day of the year, so why not the same thing for rural? I think we should be doing exactly that. It is a business and it is a lifestyle that is with you 365 days of the year. Nevertheless, there should be one day of the year when we stop and we take particular notice of what we're doing and what happens in rural communities.

I look around this chamber, and I know that a lot of my colleagues who are from rural communities are very active in those rural communities, and I know many of them have volunteered. That's part of the rural lifestyle, and that's what makes people in rural communities. We have a real strong sense of community. We have members here who have been involved with the Victorian Order of Nurses. We have members who are involved with the Red Cross, the Knights of Columbus, the federations of agriculture in their communities, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Kinsmen, Kiwanis, Rotary. They volunteer on hospital boards. Many of them have been elected to municipal councils. I know the member from Huron–Bruce was warden of Huron.

So people in rural communities have a very strong sense of their communities and of the qualities and values they want to have and that they bring to those communities. Those are the kinds of things that we want to celebrate on a day like this. We want to make sure that we recognize those kinds of things.

We certainly have challenges in rural communities; there's no question about that. But I think that that sense of community we have helps us to overcome those kinds of things. We talk about things such as keeping our schools. We talk about delivery of health care in the rural communities. Members of the rural communities work hard to make those things happen for us.

We have certain historic and traditional values that we bring forward with us, and those things are often taken for granted by us. We expect our neighbours to do these kinds of things. It's a unique kind of lifestyle.

I just spoke with my husband again this morning, something we do all the time while I'm here in Toronto. Things are very busy on our farm right now. We've got a

wedding coming up in August for one of our daughters; it will be the last one. With Amanda's wedding, there's a lot of activity around the farm. Earlier this week, the construction company came in and construction started on the manure bunker. So there's a lot of curiosity in our community. A lot of people are stopping to ask René what's going on, and he's explaining that while he's doing his nutrient management stuff, he's also getting ready for a wedding. People are leaving a lot of comments around about that one. But everybody enjoys that, and that's the rural way of life. If people came to the yard and René were somehow upset by that and felt that maybe they were interfering or should be minding their own business, that would be taken as an insult by those people, because it's a friendliness that they bring with them when they ask about these kinds of things. It's not that they're trying to pry; they want to share with us what's happening on our farm.

That kind of sharing has been a tradition in our communities. That's what brought about things like barn-raising. That's what happens now when a farmer has an accident, and everybody pulls in with combines or plows or seed drills or whatever is needed so that farmer can recover and not have to worry about his livelihood. Everybody does that on a volunteer basis. It's the giving of the rural community. So I'm really happy that we have an opportunity to recognize that by setting June 21 aside as Rural Ontario Day. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 199 today, the bill from the member for Huron–Bruce, An Act to celebrate and recognize rural Ontario.

First of all, though, I want to acknowledge the fact that I brought two beautiful young ladies with me today from rural Ontario, my granddaughters, Rachel and Karley Rynard. They're in the audience. Rachel and Karley go to Marchmont Public School, which is a beautiful little rural Ontario school just west of Orillia. They go to school on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, so on Tuesdays and Thursdays I often get an opportunity to bring them down just for a ride and sometimes to see the Legislature.

One of the things I wanted to point out to the member from Huron–Bruce, first of all, is that I will be supporting this piece of legislation. I think anything we can do to enhance the quality of life and to promote rural Ontario, we have to use those tools available to us so that we can make sure the folks in rural Ontario do appreciate what we in this Legislature are supposed to do to promote it.

I wanted to point out to the member that I read her bill quite carefully, and I didn't see at any point the word "agriculture" actually used in the bill. I looked at the preamble and the small amount of the bill itself, and other than the fact that June 21 is the date that we will acknowledge, nothing else is mentioned about agriculture. I think that's something we've got to be very concerned about, and not only on behalf of this bill.

I think not only this government but, in a lot of cases, different governments over the years have not done

enough to promote agriculture—what I call a decline in agriculture in this province. I know that we've seen a number of cuts over the years to budgets of the Ministry of Agriculture, and if there's anything we can do to strengthen agriculture, I think we have to do it. We have to start with the Ministry of Finance giving the people in the Ministry of Agriculture enough money to operate and to promote this very important field and very important sector of our economy. Of course, that means trying to keep more young people on the farms and to strengthen them. I think, in the end, as we deal with the word "agriculture" and the whole industry of agriculture, without a strong agricultural base in the province of Ontario, we won't have strong rural communities. We can always try to attract some small businesses to those areas, some small manufacturing jobs etc., but the heart and soul of rural Ontario is a good, strong, agricultural sector. I've seen so many people leave the family farm over the last few decades, and it continues. I think it's probably one of the worst years they've ever had in agriculture in this province, or the last 16 or 18 months. I know that we have to do a lot more as politicians to promote that.

1150

That being said, though, I've always lived in rural Ontario. I love rural Ontario. I think that some of the small communities we have across our province, some of the little antique stores, some of the small businesses we see in our little villages etc., the community events that are held, the festivals—just the fact that I think the people of rural Ontario are probably far more close-knit in communities than we would see in the larger urban areas. People help each other a lot more. They're more caring, in a lot of cases, because they know these folks a lot better.

The bill is a decent bill. It does sort of follow up on Ontario Agriculture Week, a bill that was put forth by the former member for Perth–Middlesex, Bert Johnson. I would hope that the government in its wisdom would promote Ontario Agriculture Week this fall. I haven't seen anything over the last couple of years, partially because of the election, and last year I think because when the House came back it was maybe a week too late. But that is an area where the government and all the members of this House do appreciate seeing the recognition of Ontario Agriculture Week too.

That being said, I will be supporting the bill, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Let me first congratulate the member from Huron–Bruce for bringing this bill to the forefront. Rural Ontario is a huge anchor in our province. The majority of Ontario, by land mass, is rural, yet I think not just we here in this House but all Ontarians seem to take that for granted. In most cases in rural Ontario, we don't have subways, we don't have rapid transit, we don't have skyscrapers and we don't have rush hours. But what we have in rural Ontario is a quality of life which is second to none, and I'm delighted to represent a riding of which the major part—well, it is

all rural. It's very, very difficult sometimes to appreciate those qualities until you experience this.

On a personal note, I used to live in Toronto. My wife was born and raised in Toronto. The very first house that we bought in the city of Toronto, we lived there for two years. I met my next-door neighbour the day I was moving out two years later. Unbelievable. But let me tell you what happened when we moved to Brighton in Northumberland county some 25 years ago. The very first day, it was a cold, crisp day between Christmas and New Year's in 1980. My neighbours—I didn't know they were my neighbours—came in to help to move in, to look after our kids. "How can we help?" And they brought food. I don't think some of us experience those things. That's something I will never, never forget.

The other thing about rural Ontario that we need to celebrate is that agriculture is a big part of rural Ontario. It's a big component. We, as a government, have been supporting agriculture, the same as past governments. It's a vital lifeline to the people who live in this great province that we are able to grow food to supply the people of Ontario. It's something that we as a government are committed to: ensuring that that food chain is stable and making sure that those folks working on those farms 365 days a year. In many cases, there is no start or finish time to those 365 days; I've seen some of my neighbours, farmers. I'm not so sure when you can get them in the house, because they're normally outside doing chores. We need to support them, and we're committed to doing that. We need to provide them with the tools they need.

So to say that June 21 is a day we need to celebrate rural Ontario, it's long, long overdue. There's no question about it. We need, somehow, to put that in the forefront.

Let me tell you about folks in my riding; I think it was six, seven, eight years ago. As we get older, time goes faster. The local NFA, Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, started Rural Ramble, which is such a success in rural Ontario today. They invite folks from urban centres to their own farms, into their kitchens, into their barns, to show them that beef doesn't grow in the IGA freezer, that the produce doesn't grow in the Sobeys produce department, that it actually comes from somewhere.

To recognize rural Ontario on June 21 is the very least we can do for rural Ontario. I know all of us in this House are going to support this initiative, and I want to thank the member from Huron–Bruce for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs. Mitchell, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Mitchell: I want to thank the members from Oxford, Niagara Centre, Peterborough, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Simcoe North and Northumberland. Thank you, speakers. I really do appreciate you taking the time to do your research and speak on what I believe is a beginning step in recognition of our rural communities.

I want to just add to the day a letter from the member from Perth–Middlesex. I'm going to read it: "I support

and look forward to the quick passage of Bill 199. Together, the member for Huron–Bruce and I have worked together with our rural colleagues to build bridges with urban and suburban Ontario. Bill 199 is a great example of this effort, and I urge all members to support this bill.” That is from the member from Perth–Middlesex.

I encourage the members of the House to support Rural Ontario Day. This is a day on which we can recognize what our rural communities have given to the province of Ontario and will continue to give. Our rural communities have been under a great deal of duress, and we need to continually encourage all communities within Ontario.

So I thank you for your support, and I look forward to the bill moving forward at what I’m sure will be a quick pace. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to bring forward my bill today.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all members. The time allowed for private members’ public business has now expired.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L’ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (TEST PSA POUR
LE DÉPISTAGE DU CANCER DE LA
PROSTATE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 73, standing in the name of Mr. Mauro. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members for a vote, but we will first deal with the next ballot item number.

RURAL ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE JOUR
DE L’ONTARIO RURAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ballot item number 74, standing in the name of Mrs. Mitchell. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will have a vote on this as well. I will now call in the members and remind them that this is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L’ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (TEST PSA POUR
LE DÉPISTAGE DU CANCER DE LA
PROSTATE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Mauro has moved second reading of Bill 201.

All those in favour will please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Kormos, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Bisson, Gilles	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mauro, Bill	Scott, Laurie
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Hardeman, Ernie	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Horwath, Andrea	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hoy, Pat	Murdoch, Bill	Zimmer, David
Hudak, Tim	Patten, Richard	

The Deputy Speaker: All those against, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 38; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I ask that the House refer this bill to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

I remind the members that the doors will be open for 30 seconds before the next vote.

RURAL ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE JOUR
DE L’ONTARIO RURAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item 74. Mrs. Mitchell has moved second reading of Bill 199.

Same vote? No, I’m told we will have a vote.

All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Kormos, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Bisson, Gilles	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mauro, Bill	Scott, Laurie
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Hardeman, Ernie	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Horwath, Andrea	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hoy, Pat	Murdoch, Bill	Zimmer, David
Hudak, Tim	Patten, Richard	

The Deputy Speaker: All those against, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 38; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

All those in favour, please stand.

The majority being in favour, it is referred to the standing committee on general government.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I stand to recognize Canadian Environment Week—as we endure a week of smog advisories and thick air as a reminder of the toll we are taking on our environment and the toll that it can take on us.

While this government tries to figure out when a closure deadline is actually a deadline, the government has missed the opportunity to put in place real smog reduction initiatives. Smog can be fixed; smog should be fixed. Technology is available, and it's in use right now, to cut 99% of particulate matter, 96% of NO_x, 92% of SO_x from fossil fuel generators, but this government has fiddled while the problem grows.

I join in the call to spare the air and leave the car behind in favour of public transit or a bicycle. I myself walked to work this morning. That said, we do have serious problems that aren't going to be solved by a few more people walking. Even if every one of us across Ontario took those steps, we would still face the 50% smog problem billowing in from the United States, and I don't see that changing any time soon.

PHILIPPINES INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence): Today, we celebrate Filipino independence day. It gives me great pleasure to rise on behalf of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and the government of Ontario to pay tribute to all Filipino Canadians in honour of the 107th anniversary of Philippine independence.

In 1898, the Philippines succeeded in winning independence after 350 years of colonization. Today, it stands as a beacon for democracy, playing a vital role in Asia and throughout the whole world. But Filipinos of every age, in the Philippines and in Canada, do not forget the long struggle that it took to get to this point in history. We all know the tremendous personal sacrifice of those Filipinos who put their lives on the line for their nation and for freedom.

I also rise today to pay tribute to Filipino Canadians who continue to make valuable contributions to our province and our country and, of course, to the organizer of Filipino Flag Day at the Legislature, Monina Lim-Serrano, president of the Federation of Filipino Canadians.

As the Filipino government considers adopting a parliamentary system similar to Canada's, we again see a convergence of ideals and wish the Philippines and all Filipinos a happy independence day.

Mabuhay ang Filipinas. Long live the Philippines.

FLEMING COLLEGE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today to draw the attention of the Legislature to a tremendous honour that is being bestowed upon Fleming College. Today, at the Ontario Energy Association's annual reception, Fleming College will be named an outstanding leader in sustainable energy practices. Fleming College is one of seven institutions in Ontario being recognized for its environmental leadership.

The new wing at the Frost campus of Fleming College, located in Lindsay, is one of the most energy-efficient buildings in Canada and generates annual energy savings of more than \$36,000. Fleming's centre for alternative waste water treatment can treat about 3,000 litres of water a day for the new wing.

This is not the only recognition that Fleming College has received. The new technology wing in Peterborough and the new Haliburton campus have also been recognized by Natural Resources Canada.

Fleming College is committed to embracing new environmental technologies, and this award is in recognition of the excellent job they have done at finding practical applications for these technologies. Congratulations are due to Fleming president, Tony Tilly; principal, Blane Harvey; and all of the staff and students there.

The new wing at Fleming is the end result of hard work for several years on the part of many people in the community, including Jim Madder, the past principal, Brian Desbiens, the past president, and Chris Hodgson, the past MPP for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I add my voice to those congratulating Fleming College on this achievement.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Every year in this Legislature, in this building, there is a program called the Ontario Legislature internship program, and it has been going on now for some 30 years. This year marks the 30th anniversary. Every year young men and women who have just finished university and become recent graduates, some seven or eight of them, come here and they find out that what university taught them isn't necessarily true as to what goes on in the Legislature.

This is my fourth year in the Legislature, and for the previous three years I applied to have an intern but was not successful. This year, though, I think I lucked right

out, I have to tell you. A young man by the name of Ben Rossiter came to my office in February, and I am so impressed with him; I am so impressed with the program; I am so impressed with what he has been able to do in these few months in my office.

He has been totally engrossed in the life of politics. He has helped my constituents. He has even babysat upon occasion when required. But the most important thing he did was the private member's bill. I don't know how it would have come about, I don't know how it would have been passed by this Legislature at second reading, without his expertise. I am sad because tomorrow is his last day, and I would hire him if I could.

The program continues. He and his seven fellows are off to Great Britain next week. I think they are a testament to the vitality of this program, and I commend the program to all members of the Legislature in the future.

ELLIOT LAKE

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma–Manitoulin): This year marks the 50th anniversary of the beautiful city of Elliot Lake. Elliot Lake is a vibrant, full-service city of 12,000 people. I have had the honour and privilege of representing this fine city in this Legislature for 18 years.

Elliot Lake is a city that has faced many challenges. It has succeeded, however, in recreating itself as an adult lifestyle community and an attractive tourist destination. Elliot Lake has received international recognition for its success. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the city and a lot of exciting events are planned.

The Jewel in the Wilderness festival is the signature event of the year-long 50th anniversary celebration. The festival runs from June 30 to July 4. Many events are planned during the festival including a special Canada Day flag-raising at the Legion's cenotaph and a special Canada Day fireworks display that night. Also on July 1, Elliot Lake Secondary School will hold its 50th anniversary reunion. On July 2, everyone is sure to come out for the festival parade in the afternoon and the 50th anniversary street dance in the evening. There will be a special performance by Canadian music legend Randy Bachman.

These events and many more are planned for the Elliot Lake 50th anniversary Jewel in the Wilderness festival, and there are many more events throughout the year. I would ask people across Ontario to have a look at the Web site www.cityofelliottlake.com.

HYDRO PROJECT

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): While the Premier and his ministers are ever ready to appear at photo ops and press conferences, they turn a cold shoulder to issues that don't fit so neatly into their agenda.

One of those issues is the proposed hydro corridor through residential neighbourhoods in York region, and the concerns that local residents have expressed for the potential health risks, and more specifically, the linkages

of childhood leukemia to EMF exposure. Parents do not want their children to become statistics and they're not prepared to accept the avoidance tactics of this government when it comes to dealing with their concerns.

On their behalf, I call on the Premier, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of the Environment to at the very least respond to their request for a meeting during which they can discuss their concerns. Mrs. Sue Fusco, representing the STOP committee, wrote the Minister of Health on June 6, 2005, "I have forwarded information regarding implications to children living in close proximity to high-voltage lines and the linkage to leukemia." She then went on to say, "You chose to delete my message before even reading it."

To the Minister of Health and the Premier, I call on you to take the concerns of Mrs. Fusco and the hundreds of parents of thousands of children seriously before it's too late. Meet with them, listen to them, take seriously the facts that they want you to consider and assure them that you will act on their behalf in the public interest.

1340

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise today to acknowledge Seniors' Month in Ontario, and specifically some of the seniors who have made such a fine contribution to community life in Don Valley West and in the province.

In her 2004 book, *Dark Age Ahead*, Jane Jacobs writes that "A living future is forever changing, without losing itself as a framework and a context of change." I particularly want to acknowledge some of the local seniors who help provide me with the context I need to think about the living future we're building as a government.

Edna Beange, Charlotte Maher, Carole Irwin, Diane Johnson, Ben Jarvenpaa, Robert Campbell, Thanga Velymylum, Derek Chadwick, Ian Cameron, Rheta and Larry Solomon, Robert Campbell, John DalGLISH and Jack Henshaw are all activists, and most are active participants on my seniors' advisory council. These are concerned citizens who help me by commenting on the issues of the day and sharing their experience and wisdom with me. They have strong opinions about education, particularly adult and community education, health care, and infrastructure investment, especially affordable housing and social policies. They pay close attention and bring a keen, critical eye to government policies.

They approve of our initiatives to keep seniors in their homes, but they argue that we need to pay attention to well seniors who might need a little support in order to stay in their homes. They want seniors to be able to keep learning but want us to understand that they can't always afford expensive course fees. Some of them have been at the forefront of creative housing projects in their own neighbourhoods, and they want us to pay attention to the creative, innovative ideas around us.

The seniors in our community remind us that a healthy, compassionate society looks after its most vulnerable: its young, who are its future, and its elderly, who have made us what we are.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): With the passage of Bill 164, this government is once again taking a leading role in creating stronger public health policy by paving the way toward a truly smoke-free Ontario.

The Canadian Cancer Society is extremely happy that the bill has passed, and the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco has hailed the legislation as the beginning of a new era.

While I was pleased that the majority of members in this House supported this government's anti-smoking legislation, a handful of the usual Tory suspects cried foul over Bill 164, supposedly for economic reasons. But this bill will reap economic benefits for our province for generations to come.

By focusing resources on helping Ontarians kick their nicotine addictions and by altering retail regulations to keep cigarettes out of sight and out of mind, and also out of the hands of youth, we are creating a profound shift in public health habits. We are also dealing a fatal blow to the deadly culture of smoking. There is no doubt that our hospitals and our doctors will carry a lighter load as a result of this legislation.

There's also no doubt in my mind that the 80% of our population who don't smoke will be grateful that they can enjoy a meal or a drink at any public establishment without being put in harm's way. Many jurisdictions that have already gone smoke-free report that the hospitality industry experienced a real boost from such measures.

Passing Bill 164 was a question of good health policy, but it was also a solid economic move. It's another example of this government's thinking long-term and investing in the future, and that is something we can all be proud of.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you and with this House our government's historic and progressive investment in post-secondary education in our province.

For far too many years, colleges, universities and apprenticeship programs have been underfunded by governments who chose to turn a blind eye to the inherent contributions these students make to our province. From 1993 to 2003, tuition in Ontario rose 137%, the largest increase in the country.

I am proud to stand in this House today to share with my fellow members the investments our government is making to ensure a healthy and prosperous future for Ontario.

Just a few weeks ago, we made a record investment of \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education, the first such investment in 40 years.

We're investing \$100 million in the Ontario graduate fellowship endowment. In my riding of London North Centre, this will mean \$9.42 million for the University of Western Ontario, as an initial endowment. That will go to help over 2,600 graduate students.

Furthermore, Western will also receive \$13 million for facility and infrastructure renewal. In total, across the province, our government will invest an astounding \$200 million this year alone in facility revitalization, because providing a safe and healthy learning environment for our students is a priority for this government.

There is a direct link between education and prosperity. Research has shown this time and time again. Our government wants to ensure that all Ontario students not only have access to the best post-secondary education possible, but can afford to attend and learn in our province's universities and colleges.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2004-05.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JOE CORDIANO ACT, 2005

LOI DE JOE CORDIANO 2005

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act /
Projet de loi 212, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The Election Finances Act is amended to prevent constituency associations from paying the expenses of members of the Legislative Assembly unless the expenses are incurred during an election period. The short title of this act is the Joe Cordiano Act, 2005.

DEFERRED VOTES

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXÉCUTION

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act

and the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of enforcement and other matters / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement et la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à l'exécution et à d'autres questions

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Bisson, Gilles	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Churley, Marilyn	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sandals, Liz
Cordiano, Joseph	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John	

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think that one of the members was incorrectly counted in favour of the bill. The government would certainly support allowing the proper record to be reflected.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the vote of Mr. Wilson be reversed? Agreed.

All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Barrett, Toby	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Runciman, Robert W.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Scott, Laurie	
Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 13.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just thank the House for reversing the most embarrassing moment in my 15 years here.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It was going very well before.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: That was only one of the member's most embarrassing moments.

The Speaker: We have another deferred vote. Maybe we can get it right this time.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPPORT ARREARS ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OBLIGATIONS FAMILIALES ET L'EXÉCUTION DES ARRIÉRÉS D'ALIMENTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 155, An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997/ Projet de loi 155, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les obligations familiales et l'exécution des arriérés d'aliments et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Hudak, Tim	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bisson, Gilles	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Tory, John
Dhillon, Vic	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	McNeely, Phil	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Murdoch, Bill
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The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70; the nays are 2.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to amend and repeal various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifiant et abrogeant diverses autres lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The bells rang from 1406 to 1411.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerreitsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Hudak, Tim	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldeep	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Tory, John
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Murdoch, Bill	
Dunlop, Garfield	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 67; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I would asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Speaker: So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERS' SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. On June 17, 2003, you said,

"It was wrong to run expenses through the riding association. To my way of thinking ... what he did was wrong," referring to ministers running personal expenses through their riding associations. You were crystal clear then, Premier, and I think this is really about your standards, or at least the standards you used to expect of those whose job you now hold. By maintaining, as you did yesterday, that your Minister of Economic Development and Trade acted appropriately in putting some \$17,000 in personal expenses through his riding association, do you think you are still meeting your own very clearly articulated standards?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, let me say once again that I fully support Minister Cordiano. He has been faithful and diligent in making each and every one of his expenses public in the required way. All of his government expenses have been vetted by the Integrity Commissioner and approved by the Integrity Commissioner. All of his party expenses have been signed off by an independent third party auditor. If the member opposite is aware of any particular rule that Mr. Cordiano has broken, then I'd be delighted if he would bring that to my attention; he can always bring any kind of application before the Integrity Commissioner. But Minister Cordiano has in fact been faithful and diligent in respecting all the rules.

Mr. Tory: Premier, I think you're missing the point of the question, and the question is simple. Again, to use the words you used when you stood in this place, it is a question "about your judgment and your standards." Those are the words you used when you stood in this place two years ago. It now seems that your standards have changed. Your Minister of Economic Development and Trade put \$17,000 in personal expenses through his riding association, and when you were Leader of the Opposition, you set a standard that this exact practice, according to your words again, "was wrong." Have you changed your standard? It's not about who audited it. You can't, to use your words again, "fob it off on the Integrity Commissioner." Have your standards changed? Do you now believe that it is right and OK for Liberal cabinet ministers to have their personal expenses paid by riding associations, despite the fact that you said it was wrong when you stood here two years ago? Have you changed your standard?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Leader of the Opposition is being rather selective in terms of his recollection of my statements made at the time. Of course, he will know—and this is a painful issue for the Tories—we were talking about one Chris Stockwell at that time. Minister Cordiano has been open and transparent, and publicly filed all of his expenses. Minister Stockwell secretly funnelled expenses through OPG, where nobody could see them. Then he got caught in a tangled web of who paid for what. Then the Integrity Commissioner ruled that he had violated the Members' Integrity Act. That's why Minister Stockwell resigned.

Compare and contrast that with what Minister Cordiano has done. He's been up front, public and trans-

parent. Again, I say to the member opposite, if he is aware of a rule that Minister Cordiano has broken, then I ask him to bring that to our attention. If he feels he has some concern that should be brought before the Integrity Commissioner, then I would encourage him to do that

Mr. Tory: The rule that I would bring to your attention, you don't need brought to your attention. It was a rule that you thought should apply to the conduct of ministers when you stood in this place. That is the rule I am talking about. I'll remind you again of what you said, and ask you one more time whether this was the rule that you intended should apply to ministers then. If you want to say it's different now, that's fine; go ahead.

You said: "It was wrong to run expenses through the riding association. To my way of thinking ... what he did was wrong." There was no mention there that it was OK because he filed it. I assume previous people whom you've talked about in this regard filed their papers too. That's how we know the expenses were put through riding associations. What I'm asking you, very simply, is about a rule you set when you stood here. Is it right or is it wrong? If you think it's right, just stand up and say so, and then we'll all know. Before, you said it was wrong. Is it right or wrong today, now that you're the Premier of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I say to the member opposite that if he's aware of any particular rule that Minister Cordiano has broken, then he should bring that to our attention. He has been open, public and transparent in terms of how he has recorded his expenses. His government expenses have been approved by the Integrity Commissioner. His party expenses have been approved by an independent third party auditor. If the member opposite has some evidence that Minister Cordiano has in some way broken some kind of a rule, then he's got a couple of options. He might place the rule before us here today so that we can consider it, or he can take the matter to the Integrity Commissioner, but I gather he's not prepared to do that.

1420

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Tory: I could quote all kinds of other ministers too, and I think I will. My question is to the Premier, by the way. Let's try, "I say to you, nice try. Stop using the Integrity Commissioner's office for your political purposes to shield you from accountability"—Michael Bryant, June 10, 2003. "The Integrity Commissioner can't rule on this dispute. There's only one place that we can get to the bottom of this: It's in this Legislature...."

You used to say, Premier, when you stood here, that it was wrong to run personal expenses through the riding association. There were no ifs, ands or buts. There were no qualifications. You weren't seeking rules. You were making them up as you stood here and it's what you thought should apply to ministers of the day. We've had quite a few instances now where we've seen this money being spent for personal reasons being put through the riding associations. Are you telling your colleagues now that this is OK? Is that the new standard? Are you telling

your colleagues that in the absence of a rule it's OK? Will you tell us that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's completely unfair to compare Minister Stockwell and his activities with Minister Cordiano. The one was found by the Integrity Commissioner to have violated the Members' Integrity Act; the other's government expenditures have in fact been approved by the Integrity Commissioner.

The member opposite may want to tell me whether he believes it was right for the Erie-Lincoln riding association to pay for a membership fee for the Albany Club for Tim Hudak. I think that's a decision made by the riding association, but maybe the member opposite has a different take on this. Also, the riding association in Oak Ridges paid for Frank Klees's membership in the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce. Again, that's a choice the riding association made. If the member opposite is now telling us he's going to tell riding associations what they can and cannot spend money on, then I'm sure his members would be very, very—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We'll come to you in a minute.

If you have an interest in telling your members where they should and should not be spending money, then you should turn around and you should tell them that.

Mr. Tory: If, at some point in time, this Legislature wants to put forward a rule on that—again, we're not talking about that. We're talking about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let's not have a double standard, in the sense that we want to hear the question from the leader of the official opposition. I'd like some quiet here. Thanks.

Mr. Tory: We're talking about the rule you said you thought should apply to ministers in the previous government. If you want to stand up and say that you've changed your mind, that it's all fine now, that there are no rules, then stand up and say it. But that is what we're talking about. We're talking about your double standard, your credibility, because you were the one who said it was wrong. If you don't think it's wrong any more, have the decency to get up and say so. That's fine. We'll accept that you've changed your mind. But for you to stand here and start pointing out what everybody else does—the issue at the time and the issue today is that one of your ministers has done something you previously said was wrong. Do you still think it's wrong? If you want to say it's right, get up and say so.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I said it was wrong, but more importantly the Integrity Commissioner said that what Chris Stockwell did was wrong and forced his resignation. That was wrong. That was clear. That was evident to all of us, including Mr. Stockwell himself.

The member has chosen, through his riding association, to have certain kinds of expenditures paid for. I noted that the Erie-Lincoln riding association has paid for Mr. Hudak's membership fee for the Albany club. I noted that the Oak Ridges riding association has paid for Frank Klees's membership to the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce. I note as well that in Leeds-Grenville

they paid Bob Runciman an honorarium: \$7,500 last year, \$3,000 this year, no receipts required.

Those are decisions made by the riding association. If the leader of the official opposition is telling us that that runs contrary to what he believes is appropriate, then he should turn around and speak to the members of his party and direct them in a certain way.

Mr. Tory: Once again, what I'm saying is that—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tory: I'm saying, once again, that it's in direct violation of what you said.

But let's go to another member of the cabinet, somebody who sits right beside you, and I'll quote: "If you do work on government business, then the ministry should cover those expenses. If you do work for your party, then your party covers those expenses. But if you go out to entertain"—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: Maybe I could finish, Mr. Speaker. "But if you go out"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Allow the leader of the official opposition to complete his question, please, without any interruption.

Mr. Tory: "If you do work on government business, then the ministry should cover those expenses. If you do work for your party, then your party covers those expenses. But if you go out to entertain yourself, you should be paying for it yourself." It was the Minister of Community and Social Services who said that. That is a standard that you used to agree with, Premier. In fact, now you stand here and blindly defend someone in your ministry who is putting \$17,000 of expenses through the riding association.

If you've changed your mind, then please get up and inform us of that. You might turn to your next-door neighbour, Ms. Pupatello, and tell her that you've changed your mind from two years ago as well. Otherwise, we are left to conclude, I assume, that just like on taxes, just like on deficits, just like on help for autistic children, your word is not to be relied upon. Get up and tell us if you've changed your mind.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We'll go through it again so the leader of the official opposition understands, and it will be interesting to see how he deals with his caucus on this matter.

Mr. Hudak has had a membership fee for the Albany Club paid for by his riding association. Mr. Klees's membership to the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce has been paid for by his riding association. Mr. Runciman's \$7,500, no-receipts-required honorarium has been paid for by his riding association. In 2004, in Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the riding association paid Joe Tascona over \$9,000 for undisclosed expenses.

Let me tell you what we have done since we've earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government. We have definitely set a high standard. We've opened up OPG and Hydro One to public scrutiny. We have re-

quired that all government expenses be submitted to the Integrity Commissioner. We are setting up a citizens' jury to look at political finance reform.

Again, I say that I have every confidence and faith in Minister Cordiano and all my ministers, who are respecting the law and who are being up front and transparent in terms of their expenditure filings.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I want to ask you about your standards for cabinet minister conduct.

Two years ago, when Chris Stockwell got into trouble for using riding association money—taxpayer-subsidized riding association money—to cover his personal expenses, you were very quick to condemn, and I want to quote you. "It is wrong to run some \$25,000 in family expenses through the riding association. To my way of thinking, Premier [Eves], you should have fired Chris Stockwell because what he did was wrong." But now it's obvious that your cabinet minister Mr. Cordiano is engaging in his Stockwellian tastes: expensive dinners, theatre tickets in London, expensive suits.

Premier, why won't you hold your own cabinet ministers to the standards that you were so quick to pronounce two years ago when judging a different cabinet minister?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Not only was it a different cabinet minister; it was a different set of circumstances. Again, that was a case of a minister who did not fully disclose his expenses, who tried to funnel them through a government agency, and who was subsequently found by the Integrity Commissioner to be in breach of the Members' Integrity Act.

That is not the case here. What we have here today is a case of a member who has had all of his expenditures approved by the Integrity Commissioner and who has had his party expenses approved by an independent third party auditor. So I say to the leader of the NDP, as I said to the leader of the official opposition, if you are aware of a particular rule that has been broken, then I would ask that you make that public so that we can all deal with that. If you believe that the minister has done something that runs contrary to the Members' Integrity Act, then of course you are free to bring this to the Integrity Commissioner.

1430

Mr. Hampton: Premier, as you said then, it's about your standards. These are the standards that you set two years ago when you were oh, so quick to judge and oh, so holy in terms of your description of the situation. This is not about the Integrity Commissioner. Mr. Stockwell volunteered to the media that he had put some of his personal expenses through his riding association. And that's exactly what you condemned: expensive meals in Paris, in Milan, in Tokyo, theatre tickets in London, all being taxpayer subsidized. You said then that cabinet ministers caught running expenses through riding associations should be fired because it's wrong. Premier,

didn't you mean what you said then? Were you not sincere in your words?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Integrity Commissioner was right. He made a ruling that what Chris Stockwell did was wrong. To funnel expenses through the OPG and to not make those public was wrong. The then minister, Minister Stockwell, was caught up in a tangled web. The Integrity Commissioner ultimately made a ruling. I think he made the right ruling. I think everybody here would agree that he made the right ruling. There is no comparison in any way, shape or form to the grounds for that resignation with the circumstances behind Minister Cordiano, who has been very public, very up front about all of his expenditures. His expenditures have been approved by the Integrity Commissioner, and those that he submitted to his riding association have been approved by an independent third party audit, all of which has been made public.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, all the audit of the riding association figures proved is exactly what you condemned Mr. Stockwell for, that Mr. Cordiano was running personal expenses that you used to condemn through taxpayer-subsidized riding accounts. I want to quote you again from two years ago: "You cannot fob this matter over to the Integrity Commissioner. It's about you, your judgment and your standards. At what point in time are you, as Premier, going to exercise some leadership, at least some modicum of leadership, and tell your caucus and cabinet ministers that in your government, there are some things that are right and there are some things that are wrong?" That's to quote Dalton McGuinty two years ago. What Joe Cordiano has done, running personal expenses through a riding account, is the same thing.

I ask you what you asked then: When are you going to have the courage, the intestinal fortitude, the conviction to stand up and condemn this minister for what he did as wrong and ask for his resignation? That's what you said then, Premier. What's your answer now?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think the Integrity Commissioner was right. I think he made the right call. He said that you cannot funnel expenses through the OPG. He said that you've got to be up front with your expenditures, you've got to make those public. Minister Cordiano has done that on both counts. With respect to his government expenses, he has presented those to the Integrity Commissioner, and they have been approved. With respect to his party expenses, those have been submitted to his riding association. They have been the subject of a third party independent audit. Again, they have been approved.

If the leader of the NDP is aware of a rule that has been broken, then I ask him to make that clear to all of us. If he thinks that the government expenses, for some reason, have not been proper, then he can of course take this up with the Integrity Commissioner himself.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Premier, you're doing your best to confuse the issue. The Integrity Com-

missioner doesn't look at riding association accounts, the Integrity Commissioner has no jurisdiction to look at riding association accounts, and that's what you were so quick to condemn about Mr. Stockwell two years ago.

But I want to ask you about another cabinet minister, Mr. Smitherman, because Mr. Smitherman, in his riding association return, lists \$11,174 in unspecified, undisclosed secret expenses. We know what Mr. Cordiano did, according to your standards of two years ago, was wrong. Could you tell us why Mr. Smitherman would run over \$11,000 of personal expenses through his riding association account and then not disclose what they're for, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that Minister Smitherman, earlier today, made public the individual items under his expenses. I'll have a page take it over to the leader of the NDP. Again, this was submitted in a very public, up front, open, transparent way to the riding association. The riding association has approved these, and the financial statement submitted by the riding association has been approved by an independent third party audit.

Again I say to the leader of the NDP, if there is some rule here that Minister Smitherman has broken, then we ask that you bring that to our attention. If you think somehow he's done something wrong in breach of the Members' Integrity Act, then we would invite you to bring that before the Integrity Commissioner himself.

Mr. Hampton: I say again, Premier, you were the one who said two years ago, "Don't try to fob this off on the Integrity Commissioner." You said two years ago that this was about the Premier's standards, the Premier's rules: what he would accept in terms of members' conduct. I see here that Mr. Smitherman has been doing the same thing: a \$3,000 clothing reimbursement and hospitality expenses of \$1,600, all being run through the riding association.

I would ask, why wouldn't Mr. Smitherman disclose this in the first place? One of the other promises you made was that your government would be open and transparent. What we've seen here is that Mr. Smitherman tried to run this through his riding association account without disclosing that these are personal expenses: clothing, hospitality. According to your standards of two years ago, this was completely unacceptable. How is it that it was unacceptable then, but now that you're on the other side of the House, it's completely acceptable according to Dalton McGuinty?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What we've got is a case here of Minister Smitherman, who has been very open and very transparent. If people want further detail, we have provided further detail. By the way, close to half of this \$11,000 expenditure was for delegate fees to attend an annual general meeting. Again, these are expenses that have been approved by the riding association executive; they've been approved by an independent third party auditor.

I don't think there's any way that you can compare the public and transparent manner in which Minister

Smitherman has acted with Minister Stockwell's activities when he funnelled expenses through OPG and was found by the Integrity Commissioner to be in breach of the Members' Integrity Act. Again I say to the member opposite, if he's aware of a rule that Minister Smitherman has breached, if he thinks he's contravened the Members' Integrity Act, then I invite him to bring this to the Integrity Commissioner.

Mr. Hampton: No one here is concerned about the Integrity Commissioner, and two years ago, you weren't concerned about the Integrity Commissioner. You were the one who said, "Don't try to fob this off on the Integrity Commissioner." No one here is concerned about OPG or Hydro One. We're raising the exact same issue that you raised two years ago when you said it was wrong for a cabinet minister to pass personal expenses—like going to an expensive theatre or to an expensive restaurant, or buying new suits—off on to taxpayer-subsidized riding association accounts. That's what Dalton McGuinty said.

What this typifies today is exactly what typifies your government: You say one thing before the election; you do something completely opposite after the election. Tell us, Premier, how do you justify this kind of blatant double standard: holier-than-thou before the election and see-no-evil after the election?

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Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is, I think, unfairly trying to draw a parallel between the activities of Chris Stockwell and the activities of either Minister Smitherman or Minister Cordiano. In the first instance, Mr. Stockwell was found by the Integrity Commissioner to have contravened the Members' Integrity Act, because he funnelled expenses through OPG, a government agency. What we have done is shine the light of transparency on OPG and Hydro One.

If the leader of the NDP is aware of some particular rule that has been broken here, in any way, shape or form, then I ask that he bring that to our attention. Again, if he thinks that any member over here has contravened the Members' Integrity Act, then I invite him to make a submission to the Integrity Commissioner.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a questions for the Premier as well, related to this issue. Yesterday, Premier, after—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I would ask the ministers who have been interrupting constantly to be much more quiet in their outbursts, or no outbursts at all during the questions, and allow the members to ask their questions undisturbed.

The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate that intervention.

Yesterday, Premier, during a press scrum after question period, Minister Cordiano was explaining some of the more controversial expenditures that were raised in his filing, expenditures at very expensive restaurants, some outside of the country: Mezzo; Bistro 990. The

minister indicated that those were political dinners where he and his staff would get together; you know, it was a high priority to talk about riding issues while they were in Milan—that sort of thing. Premier, I would ask if you will indicate today that you are willing to release, and will release, Minister Cordiano's ministerial expense filings for the same period covered by the issues that are now in question.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member should know that the Office of the Integrity Commissioner releases, on an annual basis, a report of the review of expense claims covering certain periods. I have here copies of his report—these are public documents—for the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005, and April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004, and in both cases there's a statement made therein by the Integrity Commissioner that says: "A review of all expense claims for the period"—and he lists the period—"has been completed, and I am pleased to report that all requests for reimbursements were complied with and all expense claims reviewed were subsequently approved." What the member is asking for is a matter of public record, and he should know that. Again, I say that Minister Cordiano has been up front and transparent about all of his expenditures.

Mr. Runciman: The response has nothing to do with the price of cheese. The Premier is running away from his own words and running away from what's left of his own reputation and integrity. What we're talking about here is the ability to compare the riding expenses and the contentions made by the minister as to what those expenses included, with ministerial expenses. I think the Premier, if he wants to be honest and up front with respect to a response here, will indicate that if there are any of these expenses that line up with ministerial expenses, I think it raises very serious questions about the veracity of the comments made by the minister during that press scrum. I think it's incumbent upon you to make that information public, and make it public today. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the information is available through the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, and the reports are there for all to see. I would again contrast the member's activities with Minister Cordiano. He's been up front and transparent and has put forward all these items in order for either the Integrity Commissioner or an independent third party auditor to review and to approve or reject. The member has received a \$7,500 honorarium. If there are some receipts or itemized accounting for that \$7,500, then I'm sure we would be very interested in learning about that. More recently he received a \$3,000 honorarium, again, in my understanding, completely without receipts. Compare and contrast: open, up front, transparent and approved.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Premier: Yesterday, your Minister of Economic Development told reporters, "The odd expense I felt was more appropriately put through the riding association because it was political." Can you explain to this chamber the

political purpose of the theatre tickets that the minister purchased at the Leicester Square box office in London, England, for which he was subsequently reimbursed by his riding association?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: There are government expenses and there are party expenses. When it comes to approval of government expenses, of course we look to the Integrity Commissioner. When it comes to the party expenses, that is a subject for consideration by a riding association executive, by riding association membership and, ultimately, by an independent, third party auditor.

I have made it clear today that there are a number of riding associations that have approved a number of different kinds of expenses. It ultimately falls to a riding association, its executive and its membership as to whether or not they are going to approve those kinds of things.

Again, if the member opposite is aware of any rule of any kind that anybody over here has broken, then I would ask that he make that public for all of us to consider.

Mr. Kormos: In 2003, your Minister of Community and Social Services said here in this chamber with respect to Cam Jackson, "\$842 for a meal at Soul of the Vine, and then in that same time frame he billed the riding association \$842 for a meal at Soul of the Vine.... Those bills were for a personal nature and therefore taxpayers shouldn't be footing that bill."

Premier, please, can you explain the difference between the suit that your Minister of Economic Development's riding association purchased for him and the meals Mr. Jackson had that so angered your colleague two years ago?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think what we were talking about in the case of Mr. Jackson was his trying to pass that off as a government expense. What we're talking about here is that Minister Cordiano has been scrupulous in terms of making a distinction between a government expense and a party expense. Government expenses have to be approved by the Integrity Commissioner. His expenses through the government have been approved by the Integrity Commissioner. With respect to party expenses, he has a responsibility to be accountable, of course, to the riding association and to an independent, third party auditor. He has done that. In each and every instance he has followed the rules. He has done what has been requested of him. He has been public, transparent and open, and in both cases his expenditures have been approved.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Premier. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled today on the constitutionality of the medicare laws in Quebec. Premier, we know that this ruling only applies to Quebec as it relates to its own charter, but, as you can imagine, some may be worried that the decisions made today can potentially affect our universal medicare system here in Ontario.

Can you reassure the people of Ontario that universal, one-tiered, accessible and publicly administered medicare will remain protected in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I want to thank the member for a very important question. I know that some Ontarians may very well be concerned as a result of the decision made at the Supreme Court of Canada level which was made public today.

I want to be very clear: Ontario's position on medicare is very clear and, in fact, it is now embodied in Ontario law, our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. This law protects universal, public medicare. It ensures that all Ontarians have access to quality care, regardless of their ability to pay. Medicare, in combination with our law, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, gives expression to what I think is a universal desire on the part of Ontarians to ensure that we are giving good, quality health care to all Ontarians, regardless of their ability to pay. The only reason we want to look after our sick Ontarians is because they happen to be sick.

What I want to offer today to the people of Ontario is reassurance that we have a law in place, but more important than that, that we have a government that is committed to universal public medicare.

1450

Mr. Colle: Premier, under your leadership in the last election, we went door to door and spoke to the people about our plans to improve medicare and protect it in Ontario. We spoke about our plans to reduce wait times, to provide greater access to doctors and nurses, and about our plans to make Ontarians healthier. What are we doing to improve the quality of health care and finally restore confidence in medicare in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You may know that in part the subject of the matter that was brought before the Supreme Court of Canada had to do with access to timely health care, and the issue was related to wait times in particular. We have a very aggressive strategy in Ontario, championed by my Minister of Health, Mr. Smitherman.

We have just recently made the largest increase in a decade in terms of funding to attack wait times in Ontario: \$154 million. With that additional investment, we're going to buy 24% more MRI scans; we're going to replace 26 CT machines with new equipment; we're going to increase our hip and knee operations by 16%—that's 4,300 more; we're going to increase our cardiac procedures by a full 7%—that's 7,000 more; we're going to increase our cataract procedures by 13%—that's 14,000 more; and finally, we're going to increase our cancer surgeries by 2,900 more.

We understand that Ontarians are concerned about wait times, but I want them to know that they have a government in place that is attacking this in a very aggressive way.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to talk about this, but I think it's very important. "It's about your judgment, Premier, and your standards": Those were your words on June 17, 2003. With regard to the issue of expenses, I think we should focus on the issue of judgment. I would now ask you, in light of your comments about the importance of judgment, do you believe it was good judgment on the part of the minister to put the claims forward that he did put forward? Regardless of the rules, regardless of approval, was it good judgment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I think it was very good judgment that the minister reported all of his expenditures. He made those public and transparent. He didn't try to hide anything. Those that should be reported by way of government expenditures were reported to the Integrity Commissioner and subsequently approved. Those that were party expenditures, he reported to his riding association. They were approved by his membership, through the executive, and ultimately by an independent third party audit.

I say to the member opposite, if he's aware of any particular rule that Minister Cordiano has breached, than he should bring that to our attention.

Mr. Klees: I would ask the Premier, given the issue around these rules that are approved, rules that allow suits to be approved by a riding association or by an independent auditor, will the Premier now undertake to change those rules, to in fact put in place rules that will ensure that expenses that are submitted by members are legitimate expenses that relate to the business we perform as members of the Legislature? Will the Premier agree to show some leadership, take initiative and ensure that those rules are very clear for members of this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I have confidence in our riding associations and independent third party auditors to approve of expenditures submitted by members. Now maybe the member opposite does not feel that way. Maybe he feels his riding association's approval of his membership fee to the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce was inappropriate. If that is the case, then he should refund that money to his riding association. If he feels that his colleague Tim Hudak was inappropriately funded a membership fee for the Albany Club, then he should convey that to Mr. Hudak and advise him to return that money to the riding association. If he feels that the honorarium awarded to Mr. Runciman to the tune of some \$7,500 one year and a \$3,000 honorarium elsewhere—then perhaps he should convey that to the members of his party. I would say again that Minister Cordiano has in fact followed all of the rules. He's been public, transparent and open. Beyond that, his expenses have been approved.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, two years ago you were very clear. You said that when cabinet ministers get caught running personal expenses through riding associations they should be fired because it's wrong. You said that taxpayers should not be subsidizing, through riding associations, personal expenses like a vacation, personal expenses like clothing or personal expenses like an expensive restaurant. Yet we have a case here where your cabinet ministers now, two years later, have been doing exactly what you said was wrong two years ago. Can you tell us what your justification is for suddenly saying what was wrong two years ago under another government is now quite acceptable under your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP is making an unfair comparison between Minister Cordiano and Chris Stockwell. Minister Cordiano has been public, up front and transparent when it comes to all of his expenditures. He has sought and obtained approval from either the Integrity Commissioner or his riding association executive in an independent third party audit. In the case of Mr. Stockwell, he tried to funnel government expenses through the OPG and was found by the Integrity Commissioner to be in violation of the Members' Integrity Act. Again, Minister Cordiano has been up front, public and transparent. He has sought the necessary approvals. Those approvals have also been obtained.

Mr. Hampton: Two years ago you were very quick to say, "Don't try to fob this off on the Integrity Commissioner; don't try to fob this off on someone else." You were very quick to say that this is about the Premier's standards; this is about what a Premier allows in terms of the conduct of his cabinet ministers. You were very quick to point out then that it was about what the Premier considers acceptable.

Premier, I'm asking you today, if it was unacceptable then for someone like Chris Stockwell to claim personal hotel expenses and run them through his riding association, to run restaurant costs through his riding association, why is it acceptable now for your cabinet minister to do exactly the same thing?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It was unacceptable and it remains unacceptable to try to funnel expenditures through OPG. In fact, we've ensured that cannot happen again by making OPG subject to greater transparency.

Minister Cordiano has, throughout, done what has been required of him. When it comes to his government expenditures, he has submitted those to the Integrity Commissioner and they've been approved. With respect to his party expenditures, he has submitted those to his riding association, through the executive, which has in turn filed a financial statement which has been approved by an independent third party auditor. He has been open, public and transparent. He has submitted the necessary information. His expenditures have been approved on both counts. He has done what has been required of him.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association entered into an historic agreement on provincial issues about six weeks ago. The framework agreement was excellent news for students: 1,300 specialist teachers in art, music, phys ed and libraries would be hired, as well as teachers to reduce class size. All of this is the centrepiece of a \$128-million framework agreement.

Minister, your deadline of June 1 passed, with several school boards still to conclude contracts. Many parents and students in my riding were concerned when you suspended, on June 1, access for certain boards, including the Thames Valley District School Board and the Avon Maitland District School Board. Minister, can you please update this House on how many contracts between elementary teachers and school boards are still outstanding?

1500

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Thank you for the question. I also want to thank the member opposite for his helpful involvement in terms of making sure of what we need to get arrangements done, which is a good environment. In Avon Maitland, Thames Valley and the seven other boards that were taken out of the provincial framework because they hadn't maintained that environment, I'm pleased to report to the House that as of early this morning, all of the boards have been able to succeed in arriving at collective agreements. So we have now 116 out of 122 boards concluded, and none that are not in goodwill conditions, and we expect now that we will have all 122 concluded very shortly. There are no students, then, who are going to be denied any of the benefits that are under this. I'm very pleased to say that the teachers and the boards have reconciled themselves to the provincial framework, and they've done it in a way that I think provides a real platform for the future and a goodwill environment in the way that they're agreeing on things that are important to students.

Mr. Wilkinson: That is absolutely fabulous news. Four-year agreements with elementary teachers will mean peace and stability in our schools across Ontario until 2008. Minister, what new supports can parents and students in my riding expect will follow from these agreements, and what is the status of negotiations with secondary teachers?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: Again, the four-year agreements with elementary teachers mean more than just peace and stability. They mean that there will be 2,000 specialist teachers available providing arts and music, phys ed and an enhanced education in a variety of areas, whether it's literacy or numeracy or those that I've mentioned. It also means, though, that there's a clear signal that public education is moving forward, that any parents or anybody in the province thinking of not committing their children to public education now can be assured that there is a clear point not just of stability but of progress, and we're

going to make up for some of the losses of years in the past.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to tell you and the rest of the House that the secondary agreements are almost all completed as well. We only have in total six outstanding, and they're being done under goodwill conditions. The boards are working hard, as are the teacher federations, and that means they also will have their own significant benefits, particularly in the way of help for students who are struggling. There will be approximately 2,000 teachers in that area as well. I should add that these are in addition to the other benefits, such as reduced class size and enhanced programs in a variety of areas. There has been a tremendous amount of effort with education, and this House I think—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question?

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Premier, yesterday you found out about the spending habits of your Minister of Economic Development and Trade. You found out that he's been spending riding association money on suits, meals and theatre tickets, not just here in Ontario, but in other countries where it's more difficult to claim he's doing political work on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party. When you were leader of the official opposition, you called on a minister to resign from cabinet. In these circumstances, not asking the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to resign would demonstrate you have an ethical double standard: You have one rule for Liberals and a different rule for everyone else. Will you live up to the standard that you set when in opposition and ask for the minister's resignation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I think the important standard to which we must all adhere is to understand that it is wrong to funnel expenditures through a government agency in an attempt to hide them from public view and public scrutiny. In fact, that was found by the Integrity Commissioner to be in violation of the Members' Integrity Act. Again, I say with respect to Minister Cordiano's expenditures, whether of a governmental nature or of a party nature, they have been approved in both instances, respectively, by the Integrity Commissioner and an independent third party audit. He has been open, public and transparent. He has made the information available to those who review these matters, and that information has been approved.

Ms. Scott: Yesterday the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said in his own defence, "The Integrity Commissioner has gone thoroughly through my expenses on travel-related matters." But the Integrity Commissioner didn't audit the expenses submitted through the riding association.

The minister, when he was a member of the opposition, asked a question in the Legislature dealing with

spending excesses. He asked, "Don't you think it's time to clean up your act and become more accountable to the public?"

Premier, isn't it time that you became more accountable to the public and stopped using the double standard? It's time for you to act with integrity and time for you to ask your minister to resign.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think Minister Cordiano has been exemplary in terms of his accountability. He has made his expenditures public. He has submitted them to the appropriate individuals, whether to the auditor of the riding association or the Integrity Commissioner.

Today, it's obvious that we have riding associations in the province of Ontario covering membership fees to the Albany Club, memberships to the Richmond Hill chamber of commerce, and honoraria paid to an individual. In another case, we have \$9,000 for undisclosed expenses. The member opposite may be saying that she wants to second-guess the judgment of the Conservative riding association executives.

I have confidence that Minister Cordiano has submitted the appropriate expenditures and that he has been approved by the appropriate authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question. The member from Beaches–East York?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, in your election platform you said, "The Harris-Eves government treats your money like it is their own. We think that is irresponsible. We will treat your hard-earned dollars with respect." In that same document, you promised parents raising families on social assistance that you would cut government waste and find the money to end the clawback of their baby bonus.

You've broken both of those. Two years later, the parents are still being clawed back, and two years later, you are not respecting taxpayers' money.

Mr. Premier, my question is a difficult one, I think, for you: Can you explain why blowing public money on suits, expensive meals and theatre tickets is just as acceptable for you as breaking your promises to poor children?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Let me just say this: Since the time that we did our work in opposition, I can guarantee you, without even looking—although I will commit to look—that the level of expenses that are paid to ministers through this government would pale in comparison to that of the last government. I can tell you that it's about time a government of Ontario understood that when we spend taxpayers' money, we spend it like it's our own. I will guarantee you that the expenses of the ministers in this cabinet don't come anywhere near those of the last government.

I will tell you how proud I am of our children's policy in this government; in particular, the national child benefit policy, which we changed immediately upon forming the government.

Interjection.

The Speaker: We'll wait till the member from Nepean–Carleton quiets down a bit. Your mic is not on when I'm standing, and you know that.

Supplementary?

Mr. Prue: Madam Minister, I look forward to that very day when every poor child you speak of has a \$1,300 suit—

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): And a riding association to pay for it.

Mr. Prue: —from the riding association.

You tell parents raising children in poverty that Ontario can't afford to end the clawback. That's what you say. Then you turn around and say it's OK for cabinet to blow thousands on foreign travel, expensive meals, theatre tickets and thousand-dollar suits.

Before the election, you and your government said it is wrong to run \$25,000 in family expenses through the riding association. Why is it OK now, when children of families on disabilities continue to go hungry?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me say this: The member opposite is part of a government and a party that lost 1,000 jobs a week. In comparison, our minister responsible for economic development has brought Ontario \$3.5 billion in auto investment. Where I come from, that is a significant investment. And do you know what that means? Taxpayers are happy to support the policies of our government, which are there to support children, including changes to the national child benefit, because since we took office, there are millions more remaining in the hands of families, especially those who are our most vulnerable families—millions of dollars today left in the hands of those families. I am proud of the achievements of this government for those families, our most vulnerable families. They deserve help, and they are getting it from this government.

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HIGHWAY 406

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Earlier today, you, along with Minister Bradley, were down in my neck of the woods, down in the Niagara area, and you announced that the McGuinty government will be widening Highway 406 through the Niagara region. I cannot tell you how happy the people of Niagara are to hear this from you today. So thank you on behalf of the people of Niagara.

Anybody who has done any commuting in the greater Toronto area or in the Golden Horseshoe knows that there's no greater madness than commuting. As the great author Agatha Christie said, in the very old days one would try to be mad in the sane world, but nowadays one has to be sane in a very mad world, and the greatest

madness out there is the traffic congestion on our highways. We're very happy to see you working on that. Not only is it just madness when you're sitting there frittering away hours and hours, cobwebs growing on your bumper, but this will be a tremendous contribution to the economy. Can you please explain that link for us?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member from Stoney Creek for asking this question. I was very pleased to have two of my colleagues join me this afternoon to make this announcement: Minister Bradley, the member from St. Catharines, and my colleague Kim Craitor from Niagara Falls.

This is a great investment and a great announcement for the region of Niagara. Let me tell you what we announced. The McGuinty government has announced \$25 million to upgrade Highway 406 from two lanes to four lanes between Beaverdams Road and Port Robinson. In addition to that, we will be doing the interchange on Highway 20.

We feel this is a great investment for the region. It's a great economic corridor, and in order to grow that area, we need to make these sorts of investments in that region. We are putting about \$1 billion into highway infrastructure this year, and this is part of that investment.

Ms. Mossop: Minister, we are really, really pleased to hear this news. You may remember—all the members in this House will remember—that back on April 25 to 27 we had a delegation come from Niagara. The Niagara Economic and Tourism Corp. came to Queen's Park to demonstrate to our government the importance of a strong Niagara economy to our province. They talked specifically about getting the expansion to the 406, so I know that there is a great deal of celebration in Niagara today.

For far too long, other governments have failed to recognize the vital role of the Niagara region in our provincial economy. Minister, can you tell the Legislature what this announcement today means, not just for the province but also for the people and the businesses of Niagara?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I'm sure my colleague the Minister of Tourism and Recreation will be more than pleased to answer this question.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): And so I am, Mr. Speaker. This was delightful news for the Niagara region today, because I remember in 1999, during the election campaign—the member for Welland-Thorold of the day could tell me. Wasn't there a press conference with a couple of Conservative ministers and the local Conservative member? They were going to build the 406. It did not happen. It wasn't even in *The Road Ahead*, the Conservative platform.

But this time it is being done, and it is being done because it will bring economic benefit to the Niagara Peninsula. It will help tourism, because everybody wants to get down to Welland and Fonthill to enjoy the tourism. That's exceedingly important.

There's another very important reason, however, for this, and that is, with the greenbelt legislation, we want to ensure that you can grow to the south of the Niagara region. We can grow to the south of the Niagara region, because we have a wide—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): Time, time.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I am the one who keeps the time here. As a matter of fact, if you'd allow him to speak, there would be another question. But you continue to talk on and on until we have almost burned the time off. I'll take one new question.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. We've had some trouble today, and because we have this one more chance, perhaps you could enlighten us with respect to what your opinion is—we know what it was before—regardless of what party we're talking about, with respect to the issue of taxpayer-subsidized money being used to fund these various kinds of expenses.

What I'd like to ask you is this: You said earlier today that we could get access to these receipts and other information from the Integrity Commissioner; as you know, we have to apply for those under freedom of information. The Integrity Commissioner's report tells us nothing about individual expenses. It takes months and months. You said they needed a software consultant to come in and get us the report.

Would you agree, as I asked you in writing earlier today, to have tabled for us immediately the minister's expense reports, which the Integrity Commissioner would never have seen in the context of the discussion we've had today, and would you agree as well to have made available to us right away the material that backed up the audited statement of the member's riding association? Will you agree to make those things available to us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): What the member is effectively doing is questioning the judgment, in one instance, of the Integrity Commissioner, saying that he was not provided with adequate information before he made his call as to whether or not he should approve these expenditures. On the other hand, he's saying that the independent third party auditor did not have adequate information before he made a call with respect to the party expenditures. Well, I have confidence in both the Integrity Commissioner and the auditor.

I say that Minister Cordiano has submitted all the information required—he's done so in full—and I would compare and contrast that with some of the information submitted by Mr. Tory in his campaign for the mayoralty. We have a copy of some of his municipal filing here. It is literally jotted down on the back of an envelope. Apparently, that is his standard when it comes to submitting information. Mr. Cordiano has done everything that has been required of him. It has been submitted to the appropriate authorities, and it has been approved in full.

PETITIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and

“Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of applied behavioural analysis,” also known as ABA, “within the school system; and

“Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-aged children that are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

“Whereas this situation has a negatives impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

“Whereas, as stated on the Web site for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, ‘IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all preschool children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an educational program in the form of ABA in the school system.”

I support this and affix my signature.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition from the Doversquare Tenants Association, who keep sending more petitions to the Legislature. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

“Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal ... created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs and this same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants; and

“Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management, has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board ... to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound in order to circumvent city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city’s opposition to its project;

“Whereas this project would lead to overcrowding in our densely populated community, reduce our precious

green space, further drive up rents and do nothing to solve the crisis in affordable rental housing;

“Whereas this project will drive away longer term tenants partially shielded from the post-1998 Harris-Eves rent increases, thereby further reducing the number of relatively affordable units in the city core;...

“We, the undersigned, residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To institute a rent freeze until the exorbitant Tory guideline and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by inflation;

“To abrogate the Harris-Eves ‘Tenant Protection Act’ and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord ORHT and reinstates real rent controls, including an elimination of the Tory policy of ‘vacancy decontrol.’”

I will forward this to you, Mr. Speaker.

1520

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo–Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott’s Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

Of course I support this petition. I want to thank Dave Anderson for his help in circulating it.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): “Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government

were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’m submitting this on behalf of my constituents. John will deliver it to the table.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

I sign the petition and I agree with it.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton–Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure that the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

I also affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I’m pleased to present a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas:

“(1) Many senior citizens are on a fixed income;

“(2) Prescriptive eyeglasses are costly;

“(3) Dental care is very costly;

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, call upon the Legislature to include eyeglass prescription and replacement as well as dental care and dentures as part of the Ontario drug plan.”

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions against beer bottles, Tetra Paks and cans in parks. It’s addressed to the assembly, and the Minister of the Environment specifically, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children’s playgrounds;

“Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

“Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

“Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill every year instead of recycling them;

“Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment.”

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I’m delighted to sign it.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Brock township has been declared an underserviced area by the Ministry of Health with respect to physician services since 1996;

“Whereas the Ontario government announced the creation of 150 family health teams, just like the community health centre in the spring budget; and

“Whereas a CHC in Brock township could provide a range of community-based health and social services provided by a multidisciplinary team including physicians, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, health promotion coordinators, social workers, counsellors and other health professionals needed in our local community;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Brock CHC proposal submitted on February 27, 2003, be funded as recommended by the district health council.”

These petitions were received from Larry O’Connor.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here given to me in part by Glenna Hossa of Bucklepost Road in Meadowvale and Yu Dana of Ash Row Crescent in Erin Mills, and it relates to capital improvements at the Credit Valley Hospital. It’s signed by many other people, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now, and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure that the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

This is my home hospital. I’m pleased to sign it, to grant it my full endorsement, and to ask Alexandra to carry it for me.

1530

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the Huronia Regional Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

Because I fully support the content of this petition, I am pleased to add my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 144, An Act to amend

certain statutes relating to labour relations, when Bill 144 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of any vote, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be allowed; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Are we speaking to the motion on time allocation?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Yes.

Mr. Flynn: Then I would rise in support of that and will be happy to join the debate on Bill 144 after the vote is called.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise and debate on the time allocation that was just put forward by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

I appreciate the comments by the member for Oakville, indicating he was looking forward to the vote, but we're not quite ready to rush into a vote yet. We do regret that yet another time allocation motion has been put on the floor, particularly on a bill of the importance of Bill 144, which makes substantial changes with respect to labour relations.

I had the opportunity to speak to this on second reading. I know our critic, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, looks forward to further commenting on this time allocation motion as well and has brought this up in debate.

But it takes us backwards, in many senses, to eliminating the democratic right for members to choose whether they want to belong to a union or not belong to a union. I thought that fundamental to our own system of government, I thought that fundamental to our values as Canadians, that individuals of their own free will could make a decision on whether to join a union and engage in collective bargaining or choose not to and be based on individual contracts. This instead leaves members open, quite frankly, to being forced into a union without a secret, closed, private decision, free from coercion from management, free from coercion from union leaders, to actually make the decision as to their own fate, on whether to join in a union or not. We think that's a fundamental aspect of our culture as Canadians.

Now, it doesn't do that across the board; only in the construction sector does it make that particular change. You'd think this would be principles-based: You either believe in the secret ballot vote to join a union or not, or you would believe in card-based certification, which allows a certain percentage of individuals to sign cards that they're interested in a union, and then a union would be recognized. You'd think you would have a principle that would be consistent: You either believe in one system or the other, which is most fair to the rights of individuals.

We here in the Progressive Conservative Party believe that the most fair method is to allow for a secret ballot vote and individual choice. We have been consistent in that respect. In fact, under the previous Minister of Labour, we brought in bills to make sure there were secret ballot decisions. I know my colleagues in the third party similarly feel that you should be consistent. They believe in card-based certification, and they have been consistent. What's puzzling is that my colleagues opposite, the government members, choose it in one instance but reject it in another altogether. You would think there would be some consistency, and people have raised allegations in this chamber, have surmised that it might have something to do with favouritism toward certain unions and not toward others, perhaps for political reasons. I've not been convinced by any arguments by the Minister of Labour or anybody else that there is a logical reason to do so, leaving us with the only recourse: to believe that it was done more for political reasons, to split that up, than anything else.

At any rate, that's why we have been strongly opposed to Bill 144, among other reasons, on this side of the floor. We regretted today's time allocation vote instead of the vote on the particular bill, but we look forward to voicing that vote. We do hope for changes and remain optimistic, but as I said on second reading, there remain a significant number of reasons why we find 144 objectionable and why we have taken a stand against that legislation, consistent with our colleagues in the third party. My colleague from Nickel Belt—she's speaking next on this bill—will make her party's stand very clearly, as she has in the past, and again with consistency.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time and look forward to discussion from my colleagues.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): We've got a time allocation motion before us to shut down the debate on Bill 144, and we will be opposing that time allocation motion, as we have opposed time allocation motions on other bills in this assembly. It continues to be used as a mechanism to shut down legitimate debate, shut down the opposition who are trying to express legitimate concerns about the bills that are before us, and Bill 144 is no exception.

From the start, when this bill was introduced, New Democrats could not believe that the government would use Bill 144 as a mechanism to put discrimination into the workplace. I say that because the government's move on card-based certification is discriminatory, and we oppose it very much for that reason. Card-based certification is a mechanism that can be used by workers to form a trade union, and the people who are watching today should know that card-based certification was not brought in by an NDP government; it was brought in by a former Conservative government. In fact, card-based certification had historically been used as a mechanism to form a trade union up to the point in time when the Conservatives were elected in 1995. So through successive Conservative governments, going back to Leslie Frost, then through to Bill Davis, then through to Frank

Miller, then through a Liberal government under David Peterson and an NDP government under Bob Rae, card-based certification was recognized as a legitimate mechanism for men and women to use to form a trade union, which could then be used to bargain for wages and salaries, to bargain for benefits, to bargain for pensions, to bargain for better health and safety—the list goes on. The point is that it had been recognized as a legitimate mechanism to do that kind of thing, to facilitate the formation of a trade union, through successive governments who had very different philosophical views.

1540

I regret very much that one of the many changes that was made to labour laws by the former Conservative government in 1995 was to end card-based certification as a mechanism for men and women to use to form a trade union—gone. And the Conservatives made it very difficult for men and women to form a trade union. They made other changes, not only abolishing card-based certification as a mechanism, but other changes with respect to forming a trade union that have made it very difficult, under their two successive mandates, for people to legitimately be part of a trade union.

They did a whole bunch of other things with respect to labour that I was very much opposed to as well. One of the first changes they made was to repeal our Bill 40, which was a very important piece of legislation to ban scabs, to ban scab labour, in the province of Ontario. Under our government, I was pleased that our Minister of Labour brought in legislation, much as has been in Quebec for many years, that prohibited employers from using replacement workers during a strike or a lockout in a workplace in the province of Ontario. One of the prime reasons for doing that is to ensure that there isn't violence on a picket line. An employer can't hire thugs and bring them to the picket line in security vans and harass and intimidate people and follow them home and cause problems on a picket line that ultimately lead to violence situations.

In my community, after the Conservatives repealed that law and after employers could use scab labour again, a major strike we had with Mine-Mill workers at Falconbridge resulted in a lot of violence on picket lines because the employer used a thug company called Accufax who made it a point to cause all kinds of disruption on the picket line, to follow people home, to survey them when they were driving and all kinds of other things that were a real form of intimidation. There was violence on that picket line, and it was very disturbing to see. During the time when scabs were banned under our government, that type of thing couldn't happen because the employer couldn't bring in replacement workers when people were legitimately out on strike. That was another one of the changes.

The Conservatives also repealed a law we had in place that allowed agricultural workers to form a trade union; agricultural workers who work in canning factories and mushroom factories and horticultural factories, people who had a legitimate right to form a trade union and

bargain, especially for health and safety, because health and safety is atrocious in some of those employment areas. That was another piece of labour law that that Conservative government undid as well. So the change around card-based certification was but one of a number of regrettable, negative changes made by the former Conservative government with respect to labour law.

I would have assumed, if the government was going to reinstate card-based certification as they claim to do in this bill, that the Liberal government would respect what had been past history and past tradition, even of a former Liberal government under David Peterson, and reinstate card-based certification for all workers, because all workers had card-based certification before the cancellation of the act under the Conservatives. If we were going to restore what had been in place to protect workers, to allow them to legitimately form a trade union, then we should have restored and reinstated what had been in place under successive governments for over 50 years in this province. But what did the Liberal government do? Well, instead of reinstating rights for all workers to use card-based certification as a method to form a trade union, this government has decided that only one sector of workers is entitled to use card-based certification to form a trade union. This government has decided, for reasons that I still do not understand, that only those workers in the construction industry will be able to use card-based certification to form a trade union. Only those workers have protection from intimidation by employers who would use that period of a drive to form a trade union to really intimidate new workers.

We have seen that happen. We saw that happen under the Conservatives when they got rid of card-based certification. We know that is a fact in so many workplaces, especially where there are new, young workers who are not aware of their rights; in workplaces where you have a lot of female workers who are intimidated by the employer; in workplaces where you have a lot of new Canadians who don't understand their rights and are intimidated by their employer. We saw, under the Conservatives, when they got rid of card-based certification, that employers in those sectors used all kinds of tactics to really try and halt a drive that might have been going on to unionize in a particular workplace, and many times they were successful with that intimidation.

Card-based certification protects workers from that kind of intimidation. That's what you especially need in workplaces where there are a lot of young workers who don't know their rights, where there are female workers, where there are workers who are new immigrants to Canada and don't know their rights as well and can be easily intimidated. That's the kind of protection you need: to have card-based certification, to protect those folks from intimidation when they're trying to form a trade union to bargain for better working conditions.

This government thinks it's OK to discriminate against classes of workers, and I am opposed to that. This government thinks it's OK to allow card-based certification only for a certain sector of workers in the prov-

ince, and I disagree with that fundamentally. We should be going back to what has been traditional and what has been historic in this province, and that is a recognition that all workers, regardless of the sector, regardless of the workplace, have a right to card-based certification as a mechanism to form a trade union.

I heard the government try and say that the construction industry was different, and that's the reason that card-based certification was only being applied to this sector. I don't know what the difference is in the construction industry now from what it was for 50 years previous to the Conservatives cancelling card-based certification; I don't see any difference at all. Card-based certification worked on the construction site and every other site for 50 years before the Conservatives cancelled card-based certification as a mechanism to form a trade union. There's nothing different about this sector that allows it to have a different right and different protections than workers in other sectors. I'd say the same if the situation were reversed: if the government was extending card-based certification to all other workers, to each and every other worker except those in the construction industry. I wouldn't agree with that either, because that's discrimination too. All workers, in every sector, in every workplace in this province, should be allowed to use card-based certification as a mechanism to form a trade union—no discrimination against any class of workers, no discrimination against any sector of workers, no discrimination, period. That would be the fair and right thing to do if this government was truly interested in reinstating rights to those who want to form a trade union.

At the public hearing in Waterloo—which I wasn't at, because on the same day that there were public hearings on this bill in Waterloo, I was also in public hearings in Tillsonburg on a different bill—I gather, on that day those unions, even a number of unions who are going to get this protection, came to those public hearings and said that they recognized that card-based certification should be extended to all workers, that it wasn't right for the government to pick and choose, that it wasn't fair for the government to pick and choose, that it was discriminatory for the government to pick and choose who could be protected by card-based certification and to leave a whole category of other workers behind, namely some of the workers—young workers, women workers, immigrant workers—who most need protection during a union drive.

1550

It's clear that the government, through this process, even though amendments were moved by my colleague Mr. Kormos, even though trade unions came forward and said all workers needed to be protected, did not hear what all workers and their trade union representatives had to say and made no change to extend card-based certification to all workers, as we had in this province for 50 years before the Conservatives cancelled this particular mechanism.

I say to the government, I regret that you want to discriminate against classes of workers. I regret that you discriminate against autistic children over the age of six, but the government does. It's clear in this bill that the government is going to continue to discriminate against these workers, which is going to cause chaos for workers in a whole number of sectors who are legitimately trying to form a trade union. Whether we were discriminating against other workers by saying only those in construction could have card-based certification or whether it was the reverse, that we were saying other workers in other sectors could have access to card-based certification and construction workers can't, I fundamentally disagree with and oppose this type of discrimination. I cannot support this bill and cannot support the time allocation that we are dealing with here today.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow the member from Oakville a chance to engage in the debate once again on the time allocation motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed.

The Chair recognizes the member for Oakville.

Mr. Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the House for their indulgence.

Supporting Bill 144, to me, is supporting another wonderful initiative and one of numerous initiatives that have been put forward by this government in the area of labour legislation. When you look at some of the things we've been able to achieve in a very short time as a government, we have made many inroads to make this type of legislation something that's reasonable in the eyes of the people of Ontario.

When you look at things like minimum wage, we've seen that for the first time in nine years, a government—our government—has decided to increase the minimum wage. We did that on February 1, 2004, and we're raising it each year thereafter until it reaches \$8 per hour on February 1, 2007. That's a direct help to the most vulnerable workers in our society, those who work for the least amount of pay.

Last year, we were able to introduce what we called the family medical leave bill. We passed a law that allowed for up to eight weeks of job-protected leave for those people in our society who were unfortunate enough to be facing the loss of a loved one or a family member. There was protection that had been afforded at the federal level, but by twinning it with the provincial protection, it allowed people to spend time with their loved ones as they passed.

We also brought in legislation that brought an end to the 60-hour workweek. We limited the workweek. Now it requires a business to seek approval from the government each and every time their employees consent to work more than 48 hours a week. We had suspicions—in fact, we had evidence—that the previous law was being abused by some employers. We believe this also gives vulnerable employees the ability to choose how many hours to work in a week. We believe it's reasonable. We

believe that once it's implemented—it has been implemented—people will find it's a reasonable and it's a just law.

We also stepped up enforcement under the Employment Standards Act. Officers have been empowered now to ticket offenders. That results in much faster and much better compliance with employment standards in Ontario. We've conducted more than 2,000 inspections in less than a year. As of March 4 of this year, there were 931 orders issued, 254 tickets issued, eight summonses, and 28 charges laid. Since July 2004, there have been over 229 prosecutions commenced for violations of the Employment Standards Act. This is a vast improvement over the 18 prosecutions commenced in all—not each, but all—of the past five years preceding that.

We also understand that Ontario is a very multicultural and diverse society. The information that employees need to avail themselves of the protections that we all have under the Employment Standards Act should be available in languages that those employees can understand. We've gone out and ordered brochures printed in 21 languages. They're available in paper form. You can access them also on-line on the computer. They outline the employment rights and obligations that employees and employers have in the province of Ontario. So now those whose first language is neither English nor French are able to avail themselves of their employment rights in a very easy fashion.

We also created something very unique called the women's gateway. It's at www.womensinfo.ca and it provides information on employment standards and on a variety of employment-related matters that would be of specific interest to women. That's www.womensinfo.ca.

We also have some major initiatives that are taking place under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Our government has a plan that's going to reduce workplace injuries by 20%, or 60,000 per year, by 2008.

I've had the privilege and the honour of accompanying Rob Ellis on a number of his presentations when he speaks to high school students throughout the province of Ontario, and especially at this time of year when the high schools are just starting to get out and some young students are starting the very first job of their careers. Evidence has shown us that the time that you're most likely to be injured on the job is in those very few days of the very first job you have.

Working with Mr. Ellis on his presentation that is based on his own personal experience that resulted in the loss of his son has been a rewarding experience. Let me tell you that sometimes it's hard to command the attention of high school students. In this case, when Mr. Ellis speaks about the tragedy that befell his family, high school students do listen; they do understand. You can hear a pin drop in the assembly halls as he details what happened to him when he found out that his son had been injured on the job and, subsequently, about a week later, unfortunately passed away. It's a personal experience that I think Mr. Ellis is very brave to share, and I think all owe him a debt of gratitude for that.

We're also hiring over 200 new health and safety inspectors by March 2006. We've already hired 100 to date. That's going to bring the total complement of inspectors in the province of Ontario to 430. We've launched a high-risk initiative to target through extra inspections 6,000 workplaces that have the worst health and safety records. We've also implemented what we call a last chance initiative, and that gives 5,000 workplaces with subpar safety performances a chance to improve or else face intensified scrutiny by our inspectors.

Talking on Bill 144, which I think complements some of the other action that I've outlined previously, what Bill 144 does is restore some stability to the labour relations field in the province of Ontario. Any reasonable Ontarian who has an interest in these matters, whether it be from a labour perspective or from a business perspective, would think this was a reasonable step forward to ensure that the climate we have in Ontario is fair to both employees and employers. It does away with some of the wild swings we've seen over the past 14 or 15 years in the field of labour relations.

Earlier in the decade of the 1990s, we saw investment flee this province. We saw jobs flee this province. Under the previous government, unfortunately, we saw a decade of labour unrest. Some of the information we have tells us that legislation was passed to put decertification posters up in the workplace, to allow for disclosure of salaries of union officials, things that really did nothing to improve labour relations, but certainly did something to hurt the spirit of the co-operative effort we prefer to see in those types of relations.

There are two major components to the legislation that I think restore some balance. One is remedial certification; the other one is interim reinstatement.

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What remedial certification is: If a company, during the certification process, engages in an activity that, as the Minister of Labour has said, poisons the well and does not allow for the free expression of the will of the employees of a certain company, does not allow for that expression to take place, then under those very special circumstances the Ontario Labour Relations Board can issue a certification, can say that workplace is certified.

Also, what you're seeing in this bill is the introduction of interim reinstatement. If, during an organizing drive, an employee is singled out by the employer and is dismissed, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the power to reinstate that employee during the certification process.

It also brings back what a great many people have asked for, and that is card-based certification in the construction sector. We all know the construction sector is a very unique type of industry. We know that over the years it has suffered from a number of strikes, but we also know that in recent years, they've been able to work together—the contractors and the unions—to bring some peace and stability to the industry to allow for the construction in our growth areas, both commercial and residential, to take place.

What the bill does, in summary, is to restore some long-standing and historical powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. It allows them to deal with both employer and union misconduct during organizing campaigns. We believe this legislation is fair. It brings back balance to labour relations. We believe that if you can get those two qualities present in an environment like that, the workplaces become much more harmonious and more productive.

I think we're finding that the Ontario economy is becoming very productive under the McGuinty government. Between April 2004 and April 2005 in Ontario, we've seen the creation of 146,000 jobs in areas such as: Toronto, 9,400; St. Catharines, 10,600; Ottawa, the Gatineau area, 17,500. We're seeing job creation throughout the entire province: eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, northern Ontario. We're seeing a decline in the unemployment rate. We're seeing numbers going in the right direction.

While we want to bring about a climate and an environment that's fair in labour relations, what we also want to do is ensure that we have a strong economy. We want to ensure that the labour relations we have in Ontario create the workplace stability and the economic stability we need to grow a strong and prosperous economy. You can have the best labour relations, but if you have no jobs, it certainly doesn't mean a whole lot. You can have a number of jobs, but if they're in an area where the labour relations are poor, that doesn't mean a whole lot either.

By bringing back card-based certification in the construction sector, bringing back interim reinstatement and remedial certification, which affects both unions and employers and really asks those two sides to conduct themselves accordingly, to conduct themselves according to the spirit and the letter of the law as far as organizing is concerned in Ontario, we get a much more democratic workplace.

We've treated the construction sector a little differently because we know it makes such a significant contribution to Ontario's overall economic health. We have paid particular attention to the competitive health of the industry, and that includes always looking at labour relations. Labour relations stability in construction is particularly important and needs to be treated differently, since construction generally operates on a seasonal basis and has a limited working year, a certain envelope in which to complete its tasks. A strike or a lockout during that period can cause irreparable damage if a project is delayed or not completed. It can cause a delay over the winter season, perhaps, and have the project move six or eight months behind schedule. Then other projects are delayed and the cycle continues as one is delayed.

In construction work, labour is the most important factor, and the skills of the workers engaged in that trade are most critical. In fact, a construction company in many cases only consists of a few permanent key people. They rely on their knowledge and ability to bid and be awarded projects, and also on their ability to hire the right con-

tractors at the right time and the right people for the job. So the work is generally project-based and typically occurs off-site, and that results in a highly mobile work force. The use of card-based certification really takes into account that mobility. The same tradesperson, in the course of a year, may work on many different projects, may work for different employers and may even work in different geographic zones throughout the province. The construction sector is distinctive in the way that it conducts its business, and the attempts that are made to organize that industry should be expected to be different.

Bill 144 really proposes to refine some of the rules and regulations that cover labour relations. It's designed to increase fairness and stability in the construction sector and to help ensure that one of the most important economic engines in the province of Ontario continues to run smoothly for the benefit of us all, for the benefit of employers and for the benefit of those people in Ontario who choose to be represented by a bargaining agent or unit.

What I would also like to talk about is how the construction industry has been recognized over the years as being significantly different. Our proposal to add card-based certification to that sector should be seen as a step forward. It promotes individual choice, fairness and balance for construction employees, and it recognizes the individual needs of that field. Throughout the hearings, we've heard from a number of people who came forward representing a labour perspective, a business perspective or sometimes even a religious perspective. I believe that the bill that's presented before you for third reading, Bill 144, really brings forward the types of reform that bring a balanced approach to labour relations. Our government, just like other governments over the past 40 years or so, recognizes the unique conditions of the construction industry. We also recognize that stable, fair and balanced labour relations are necessary for productivity, economic growth and prosperity in this province.

Labour relations is one of many factors that need to be looked at when you're growing a strong economy in a jurisdiction such as Ontario, and it's also one of the things that international investors look at when deciding if they're going to invest in the province of Ontario. We've certainly been able, in my own riding of Oakville, to attract significant investment from the use of the auto strategy introduced by the McGuinty government, which resulted in the saving of at least 4,000 jobs at the Ford plant. We've seen the Beacon project over in the eastern end of Toronto; in Oshawa, the GM plant is bringing in increased investment, increased opportunity for skilled workers in the province of Ontario and increased economic health. I believe the international investors in those cases were looking for labour relations stability in the province, and I think we proved that we had that.

By passing Bill 144, I think we'll be sending a signal to the world that Ontario is a good place to do business, and that's of benefit to us all. I thank you for your time.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this time allo-

cation motion debate. For those who are watching the proceedings on the parliamentary channel, I want to explain what is happening here today. This is a time allocation motion, which in effect is a motion that the Liberal government has put before the House to limit or cut off debate on Bill 144. They're doing that essentially because the Progressive Conservative Party indicated some time ago our strong opposition to certain elements of this legislation, and that we were going to oppose it with every legislative tool available to an opposition party because we felt so strongly that these changes proposed by the Liberal government were not in the best interests of the province, not in the best interests of labour relations and not in the best interests of growing the economy in the province of Ontario.

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We just heard the previous speaker talk about the economy. It is interesting that he says that this is going to help the economy in the province. That is a very stark difference in terms of the views of the people who actually are in business in the province. We saw an extensive petition drive by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I think all of us as members of this assembly received petition after petition after petition, expressing concerns about primarily two elements of this legislation: the return to card-based certification and the increased powers of the Ontario Labour Relations Board to impose a union on a workplace.

What impact did that sense of concern from so many business people across the province have on the Liberal government, have on this legislation? Nada. Absolutely no impact. The government ignored it. That's regrettable when we have that strong viewpoint being expressed by so many business people, so many people who will be impacted by this legislation. The government chose to completely turn a deaf ear, a blind eye, to those concerns and to the concerns of the people who appeared before the committee hearings that looked into this legislation.

My colleague the member from Waterloo, our critic for labour, Mrs. Witmer, indicated that the hearings themselves were a sham. The government members present really paid no attention and little heed to any of the presenters, who had, I think, very significant concerns to put on the record about the legislation.

I want to talk a little bit about those concerns. Under this legislation, the Ontario Labour Relations Board will now be able to arbitrarily grant union certification. They are also re-establishing a card-based certificate system for the construction sector. This will permit automatic certification of a workplace if more than 55% of the employees sign these cards.

So what does this mean? What it means is they are abolishing a secret ballot vote. That's what they're doing by replacing it with card-based certification. What they are doing is opening the door to intimidation. If you are in a workplace where there is an organizing drive underway, you no longer have the privilege of casting a ballot in secret as to whether or not you want to see that workplace organize, a private ballot so that you can express

your views, "Is it good for us to have a union or is it a bad thing?" No, you have to sign a card. You have to show your indication of where this should go.

Any clear-thinking person has to admit that that opens the door to intimidation. There is no question about it. This is back to the future and terribly, terribly unfortunate. We have experiences in the past with the Ontario Labour Relations Board arbitrarily moving in and declaring that a workplace should be certified. Again, they're restoring those powers to the OLRB, and we think there is no case to be made to justify that return to the dark ages.

One has to ask the question, why is this happening? Why is the Liberal government moving in this direction? Why have they introduced this legislation to do away with secret ballots and to restore these arbitrary powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board?

I think there is an answer. We have to look back to the election campaign and the lead-up to the election campaign. There is an organization called Working Families, and I'm sure that you remember it, Mr. Speaker. They had billboards all over the Queen's Park Circle. They had ads in the major dailies across the province. They had radio ads, television ads, attacking the Progressive Conservative government of the day.

Well, just who was this organization? Who funded this organization? Who paid the hundreds of thousands of dollars in ads to fund this campaign? Working Families, the same organization that gave well over \$100,000 to the Liberal Party of Ontario, in addition to this attack campaign against the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. Essentially, it's the same construction unions that are benefiting from this legislation. That is one of the reasons why we have seen this legislation tabled in this House. It raises serious, serious questions about the integrity of the government, I believe.

But to compound this tragic lack of judgment and this mistake that's going to seriously damage labour relations in the province of Ontario, after Bill 144 was tabled in this House, received second reading and was sent to committee, guess what happened? I'll bet you can't guess, because I don't believe it has ever happened before in the history of this Legislature. The people benefiting from this legislation, the construction labour unions, held a thank you, thank you, thank you fundraiser for Premier Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet ministers.

Mr. McGuinty turned up for this—we saw the brochure: "Thank you, thank you, thank you, Dalton McGuinty"—right in the middle of public hearings on legislation that benefits this group. That's the reality. And what did they do? They handed over a \$250,000 cheque to the Liberal Party of Ontario. What a thank you. What a great big financial thank you, right in the middle of legislation, when it's at public hearings. How objective can that be? I would question the legality, let alone the morality, of that.

The members here are putting their heads down or yapping on the backbench, hoping to get into cabinet, and we'll find out how much frustration there is after the

cabinet shuffle in the next few weeks. There will be significant and extensive disappointment and frustration. Maybe then they'll have the intestinal fortitude to stand up on their feet in this place and outside of this place and say, "That is wrong. My party, the party I believe in, would not do that sort of thing. They would not have a fundraiser, a thank you of a quarter of a million dollars right in the middle of legislation being debated and considered that benefits that same group."

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order 23(i) prohibits members from imputing false or unavowed motives to another member.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the speaker from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: That just reinforces the point I made about backbenchers trying to get into cabinet with their efforts in this House to appease the people in the Premier's office. That's a clear indication of that kind of mindset, which is truly, truly unfortunate. This is abuse of the orders of the House.

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order 23(h) prohibits the making of an allegation against another member.

The Acting Speaker: I haven't heard that, so I'll recognize the speaker from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'll move on.

This is a truly unfortunate, unprecedented situation, and I think it does seriously draw into question the integrity and the morality of the government with respect to the way it's dealt with these issues. The fact that this organization strongly supported them—and who knows to what tune? I would suggest it's in the neighbourhood of at least half a million dollars, when you look at the advertising efforts that were undertaken prior to the writ and during the writ period, let alone the contributions themselves to the Liberal Party of Ontario—a significant amount of money.

This seems to be a very unfortunate trademark of this government, because, as I pointed out in debate in this House last week, this government did exactly the same sort of thing with respect to transportation legislation. The limousine drivers based in Mississauga, under legislation brought in by the Minister of Transportation, are now the only people who have the right to pick up passengers at Pearson airport. If a taxicab driver in the city of Toronto drops someone off, he can no longer pick up anybody at Pearson, but a limousine coming into Toronto can pick up people in Toronto. So why did they do that? Right in the middle of that legislation, the limousine drivers had a fundraiser for the Liberal Party of Ontario and gave them a \$200,000 cheque.

Just picture this: Table the legislation—here's a cheque; table the legislation—here's a cheque. What does that yell out to you? What does that yell out to any clear-thinking Ontarian? To me, that says "payoff." That is a payoff. There's no other way to describe it.

I'd like some members to get up and explain it. Instead of reading your scripts prepared by somebody in the corner office, get up and explain why you're doing this. It's shameful, shameful conduct and each and every one of you should hang your head in shame. Get up and apologize. Stand up and have the intestinal fortitude to say this is not right, this is not party that I believe in. Stand up and do that.

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Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm delighted to get up today and speak to Bill 144. Our government wants to restore fairness and balance to the labour relations system here in the province. I was a labour and employment relations lawyer on Bay St. for a number of years, and I'm well familiar with the labour relations legislation that our province has and has had over the last 15 years. I have to tell you that we've covered the spectrum with respect to the labour relations legislation over the last 15 years. Over a certain period of time, we swung to the left, and then of course we swung to the right, and now I feel that here with Bill 144, we are bringing it back. We're finding a balance, we're seeing fairness and balance back in our labour relations in the province, and I think that's incredibly important.

I've had the privilege of seeing Minister Bentley speak on this legislation and on a number of important pieces of legislation that we've introduced with respect to labour relations here in the province, and in particular, I had the privilege to see Minister Bentley speak in North Bay at the Canadore College avionics campus, where he spoke about occupational health and safety and the concerns around occupational health and safety to the students who were studying avionics and helicopter maintenance and engineering. It was an impressive afternoon, where Minister Bentley shared with them the concerns of this government, that our workers work in safe environments, work safely and watch out for their co-workers: again, another example of this government bringing back balance to our system and looking at fairness and balance within the labour relations context.

I have also had the privilege of hearing his parliamentary assistant, the member for Oakville, speak on numerous occasions on this bill, and he's worked very hard on it, and I think he should be commended. Certainly he has made a lot of us here in the Liberal caucus proud of the work he has done.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Hear, hear.

Ms. Smith: Absolutely. I would like to speak to a couple of areas of this bill, if I might. I think the member for Nickel Belt spoke briefly about the construction sector card-based certification and her concern around it being limited to the construction sector. She also noted that she didn't understand why it was specifically to the construction sector. I would note for you that the construction sector of labour relations has had its own specific sections of the Labour Relations Act for the past 40 years. We have always recognized that the construction sector is a separate and distinct sector and has specific labour relations needs, and we have recognized

that by drafting a separate section of the legislation, specifically to address those needs in the construction section. The bill would give unions in the construction sector the option of applying for certification on the basis of union membership. If the union had the support of more than 40% of the employees in the unit but less than 55%, the OLRB would require it to order a vote. The union would then be required to win the vote by more than 50%. This is not unreasonable, and again, it is bringing back fairness and balance to the construction sector.

With respect to the decertification information requirement, the bill would repeal section 63.1 of the Labour Relations Act, which requires employers and unionized workplaces to post and distribute information about the decertification process to employees. Some would argue that was a shift to the right that was introduced by the previous government. We're taking that away and, again, returning balance and fairness to our labour relations system.

The interim reinstatement provisions: The bill would repeal the existing section 98 of the Labour Relations Act and replace with it a provision that would expressly permit the Ontario Labour Relations Board to order the interim reinstatement of an employee dismissed or disciplined during an organization campaign, for exercising rights under the Labour Relations Act, pending the final determination of the issues. Again, an effort to bring back balance, to bring back fairness to the system, to recognize that people within an organization campaign do have the right to speak out, and do have the right to continue to work as they speak out.

As I wrap up my few minutes here on this bill, I would like to speak for just a brief moment about someone who has provided a great deal of assistance to me and who has worked very hard: my intern, Beki Scott, who today is spending her last day with me and her last day here at the Legislature.

Mr. Levac: No.

Ms. Smith: She is. Beki Scott and the entire class of interns that we've had the privilege to work with over the last term have been a great asset to this place, to the Legislature, and to all of us who had the privilege to have an intern working with us. So as I wind up today, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them on behalf of everyone here at the Legislature, and particularly to thank Beki, who has been so great to work with. So thank you, Beki.

Again, Bill 144 is an important bill to return fairness and balance to labour relations across the province. I strongly support this piece of legislation. As a former labour and employment lawyer, I think it does return that fairness and balance. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on this time allocation motion, and I would concur with many of the remarks that have been made by my colleague the member for Leeds-Grenville.

We in this party are very, very opposed to Bill 144. We are extremely concerned that it proposes to take away the democratic rights of employees to a secret ballot vote. We have certainly heard from employees who are concerned about that particular freedom. A freedom that people around this world cherish and look for is now being taken away; in other words, stripped from workers. It is a very, very important right. We have determined that we will fight this bill as vigorously and aggressively as we can, and so the government has been forced to impose this time allocation motion on us today.

When this bill was introduced in November 2004, in my response that day I immediately, on behalf of our party, denounced this particular piece of legislation. If we take a look at the bill as it was introduced, what it was doing basically was turning back the clock, as far as workers' rights were concerned, by about 15 years. It was creating a climate whereby workers were going to have fewer rights in the future than they had had in the past. It was, moreover, going to make Ontario a much less attractive destination for business investment and job growth. So we immediately made it known that we could not and we would not support this legislation.

I can tell you that subsequently the business community in the province of Ontario also came forward and loudly denounced this bill. In fact, we started to hear almost right away from businesses that were postponing making investment decisions in this province, postponing expanding their businesses, or there were some that were now considering perhaps moving their business to another jurisdiction. So I can tell you that this bill is going to have, and I know it already has had, a negative impact as far as new job creation is concerned. Certainly it is not, as the minister said when he introduced the bill, going to make this an attractive place to do business. It's having exactly the opposite impact.

In 1995, our government balanced the labour laws in the province of Ontario, and at the request of employees we gave everybody a secret ballot vote. I don't know how a government that talks about democratic renewal can strip workers of that right to a democratic vote and making that decision as to whether or not they want to certify. If this government remembers, it was our bill in 1995 that balanced labour laws, that had the opportunity to create an environment in the province of Ontario that allowed the private sector to create one-million-plus new jobs. That was the impact of our Bill 7. I can tell you, when that bill was passed, it was like a bell that was heard around the world. Finally, the walls around this province had come down. People in this province again started thinking about expanding their businesses. People outside of the province again looked at Ontario as a favourable destination, and as a result, one million new jobs were created.

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I can tell you that in 1995 this province was not a happy place to be. Under the NDP we had lost 10,000 jobs. It was a time when young people graduating from universities, colleges and high school were pessimistic

about their future. There were no new jobs being created. We now have a situation where we have the same potential to see a slowdown of growth in the economy, a slowdown of growth in job creation, because this legislation, Bill 144, introduced by the Liberal government, has had a very negative impact on the business community and its decisions around creating new jobs. That concerns us because ultimately if you kill jobs, you aren't going to have additional tax dollars that are going to allow you to have money to invest in health, education, community safety and the environment.

This bill has some long-term consequences that I believe we're going to start to see this year, next year and the year thereafter. I hope that, come 2007, we will once again have been elected by the people in this province and will be in a position to undo any damage that has been done by this bill.

When the bill was introduced, it immediately came to our attention that this was a bill that favoured one group over another. It favoured the construction unions over the rest of the unions in Ontario. We certainly recognized that this was payback to the construction unions that had supported this government during the provincial election.

As my colleague from Leeds–Grenville said, and it was brought to our attention subsequently, the unions are quite proud of the fact that this Working Families organization, and people never knew who they were, was indeed the construction unions. They poured a lot of money into the campaign to defeat the provincial Conservative government and to make sure the Liberals were elected. So this bill, by granting automatic certification only to the construction unions, is in many ways payback for that support.

If you take a look at this bill, it is also going to strip workers of their right to a secret ballot vote because it grants the Ontario Labour Relations Board the arbitrary power to grant union certification if they find an employer to be in violation of the Labour Relations Act. Instead of moving forward to modernize the democratic process to give citizens in this province a strong, independent voice, we now have a bill that takes away the most fundamental rights of workers in this province by stripping them of the secret ballot vote. It really is a step back and doesn't reflect the need for flexibility in the labour arena today.

I guess what was particularly disappointing was that despite the fact there was a lot of outrage, a lot of concern about this bill, the impact on individual employees and the possible impact on the growth of the economy in Ontario—we did hold public hearings on the bill. However, despite the tremendous, excellent, outstanding amendments that were submitted by people in this province, and which we put forward on their behalf and which the NDP put forward on behalf of others, this government sought not to include one amendment.

I would have to say the hearings were a sham. Before we go out again and have public hearings, I think there at least has to be a recognition, an acknowledgement on the part of the government, that they would be prepared in

future to consider some amendments which would make the bill better and would reflect some of the input that they were hearing. However, that simply did not happen. So we have a bill here in front of us that was opposed by workers, opposed by business. People were united in their opposition to Bill 144.

You have to recognize that this is a bill that can create potential problems for the business community, but also, you have to remember that this government has made it harder for the business community to create new jobs, because we've seen surging hydro rates and surging taxes. Of course, everybody now pays a health tax in Ontario. We've seen a Canadian dollar that has gone up. We're seeing increased global competition.

This government seems to have discounted the fact that it is important that we do everything possible to remain an attractive destination for investment and job creation. We want to make sure that our young people graduating from our schools have employment opportunities. We don't want to lose these young people to the United States.

Just this week, I heard from a young female student who's just graduated as a nurse. She said to me, "You know, Mrs. Witmer, I heard the government say they were going to create 8,000 new nursing spaces. I have to tell you, I'm looking for a job in Ontario. My friends are looking for nursing jobs in Ontario. There are no nursing jobs in Ontario. We're going to have to go to the United States."

This is regrettable, because the government hasn't created the 8,000 new nursing spaces—they have fired almost 800 nurses since January—and here are these young people who were full of optimism, thought they could get a job in Ontario, and it now turns out there is no full-time work available. They're going to move to the United States, and the concern, of course, is that they will stay there. These young people we've educated—we're going to lose those individuals.

I want to go back to this particular bill, because if you take a look at what was said about this bill—I want to quote the Financial Post writer Terence Corcoran:

"The amendments were portrayed by Mr. Bentley ... as an effort ... to promote 'stable labour relations and economic prosperity ... that would ensure fairness and choice in Ontario's workplaces.'

"Needless to say, the actual objective is exactly the opposite. Bill 144 ... will in fact tilt the balance of Ontario labour law to favour organized labour at the expense of employers. It will not restore balance, it will remove it."

He goes on to say, "That the bill favours unions.... The biggest sop to labour is the Liberal plan to reverse parts of the previous Conservative government's important 1998 restrictions on union ability to manipulate the system" and "to force union certification on employees who do not want a union."

He talks about the fact that the OLRB is going to have this "renewed power to order union certification."

He goes on to say, "Ontario Minister Bentley has wrong-headed policies." Then he also mentions, of course, some of the other changes and some of the implications of some of those changes.

He says, "These labour reforms are being proposed despite competition from other jurisdictions. In a recent Fraser Institute study examining flexibility in labour relation laws, Ontario ranked 52nd out of the 60 US states and Canadian provinces."

He says that this bill is "simply out of step with the reality of labour relations laws across North America...."

"Flexibility is key. As market conditions change, employees must be free to shift their employment efforts and choose the amount of hours they work."

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Judith Andrew from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business worked extremely hard in opposition to this bill. In fact, I think all of us received hundreds of petitions from their members who were seriously disturbed about the elimination of the secret ballot votes. She says that secret ballots "allow employees to make their decision to support or oppose the union, free from any coercion from employers, union organizers or peers." Yet, by a stroke of the pen, employees no longer have that freedom of choice.

I think it's important to mention that the CFIB represents about 42,000 small and medium-sized businesses in the province of Ontario. That membership certainly was strongly opposed to the bill. They also recognized that this bill was favouring labour unions, neglecting the rights of the individual worker, that it was going to lead to an unbalanced workplace with no democracy and that we are going back to the archaic union-card-signing system that has proven in history to cause imbalance and unfairness. The concern, of course, remains that before long the government will drag all the sectors back to the card-based system.

I guess what we're seeing is a repeat of the Bob Rae legislation, a time when this province lost thousands of jobs due to the NDP bringing in labour changes that tilted the balance in favour of the unions, the union leaders. I hope that this government recognizes, before we vote on this bill, that they should introduce some of the amendments they were asked to. However, I would have to say to you I'm not terribly optimistic at this point that there will be any changes.

I'd just like to take a look at the last press release that we released. We had the standing committee on social policy hold public hearings. We had dozens of presentations, dozens of people opposed to the legislation. The government made no changes whatsoever. They're moving forward with the bill despite the rhetoric about democratic renewal. They refuse to listen to anyone's advice, so this bill is going to be a huge step backward. Workers are going to lose their fundamental right to a secret ballot vote. At the end of the day, this bill certainly provides a strong disincentive for future economic investment and job creation in Ontario. I can tell you that

our caucus will be strongly voting against this Orwellian piece of legislation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to two things that are happening simultaneously in the Legislature this afternoon. One, of course, is the time allocation motion that was tabled a little earlier by the government. For those people who have just tuned in, a time allocation motion means that the government is basically stifling the debate on a particular piece of legislation that they've brought forward. They are saying that because they have the majority of voices in this place, they are going to make sure that the other voices in opposition to their bill, or other voices that might have some really significant and important suggestions or recommendations or critiques of their bill or of their piece of legislation, are going to be shut down. They're going to be stifled. They are going to be, for all intents and purposes, prevented from spending the time they might need or might want to be able to bring to light, to illuminate, to show all the things that are of concern to those other people.

So the very government that talked about transparency, increasing democracy and all of these great theories once again does not walk the walk when it comes to doing what needs to be done within the framework and the structure of this place to ensure that that very democracy and transparency is brought to light. That way of doing things is not upheld, supported or, on a real, practical basis, ensured by the government. They can ensure that because of course they have the majority. They can do exactly that: make it very clear they support those principles. But they're easy when it comes to talking the talk on those principles. The problem comes when they get here and introduce things like time allocation motions, which do the opposite of what they say they want to do in regard to their legislation and their promises around transparency and democracy.

That's the first point I wanted to make, that the time allocation motion this government has brought is why we're debating two pieces at once today: The time allocation motion is the one that is before us, technically, but the time allocation motion refers to a particular piece of legislation, the one they want to shut down debate on, and that is Bill 144. The initial piece is the fact that they are shutting down debate. They've decided they no longer want anybody in this House to talk about Bill 144. They've decided it's time to stop all the discussion and to force a time when the bill must be voted on. Hence the allocation of the time for remaining debate and final voting on the bill. That time will be about 5:30. Now it is about 10 to 5, so if people want to see how the vote on the time allocation is going to shake down, that will happen at about 5:30 tonight, in about 40 minutes. That's the first point I wanted to make. I thought it was an important one so that people understand that the government has decided they don't want to hear any more of what the opposition has to say about Bill 144.

I will now move on to Bill 144. I've had the opportunity to speak to this bill a couple of times. It's unfor-

tunate there haven't been many changes the government has chosen to make on Bill 144. If I recall, the minister introduced that bill around November of last year. I don't recall the exact date, but I'm sure it was around November of last year, because it wasn't more than a few months after that—maybe four or five months—that I attended an event in Hamilton, the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council's annual meeting. Their concern was, "The minister introduced the bill. Where the heck is it? We haven't heard hide nor hair of it since the moment he introduced it."

In fact, it finally did get to second reading stage and we've done some debate on it, but at that time I said to the building trades in my community, who are very hard-working people and who have done a lot of hard work in building our cities, our public infrastructure, our factories and our institutions—these tradespeople have done a lot of great work over the years. They certainly have some issues around how their labour, their contribution and their ability to get the justice they need in the workplace has been dealt with over time by various governments. They have some legitimate concerns about that.

They were quite adamant when they spoke to me about their desire to see this bill go forward. I was very honest with them at that time, and I'm still of the same opinion today, that I don't have a problem with many parts of the bill. I was very clear with them at that time, and we agreed to disagree on it, although even they agreed with me on the principle of card certification and the fact that card certification should not be allowed only for a certain segment of the labour movement and that all workers should have the opportunity to sign cards that indicate they want to be represented by a trade union in their workplace and that, by virtue of the majority of workers signing those cards, that would establish for them a trade union that would represent them in the workplace.

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I can say to you that it's not a far-flung concept, it's not something that somehow is coming out of the sky; this was the law in Ontario for decades. This was the law since 1950. This is not something new. This not something that the previous speaker would have you believe, which is somehow that this one piece of legislation has meant investment or non-investment, jobs or no jobs. If it was the way that they're talking about it, you would think that we would have no jobs in Ontario whatsoever ever, and that we wouldn't even have an Ontario, because there would be no investment whatsoever, nobody would have any jobs and the economy simply wouldn't exist because nobody would be able to set up shop in the province of Ontario. If that was the case, nobody would have set up shop in the province of Ontario for the last 50 years. I can just wash that away immediately.

In fact, even in the speech that was given by the critic—I believe she's the critic for the opposition—she acknowledged—although she blamed the previous NDP government for somehow losing jobs for Ontario. Of course, I wasn't here when all that happened, but I was

living in the province and I was watching what happened to the economy. Like everybody else who is honest around this chamber knows, it had much more to do with economic cycles than anything else.

If the economic cycle is upon us again, well, I have some real serious concerns. Cities particularly are going to be in trouble, because this government hasn't dealt with some of the real problems facing cities, particularly around the issue of downloading of social services and what happens to cities if they are responsible for social services during an economic downturn. I dread the thought. That is a bit of an aside.

The argument that, by having this card certification process, somehow the sky is going to fall when it comes to investment, when it comes to people locating businesses, when it comes to people actually investing in the province of Ontario, is simply bunk, and we all know it is bunk.

What we don't know, and what I haven't been able to figure out, is why the McGuinty Liberal government favours following in the footsteps of Mike Harris's labour legislation as opposed to all of the other Premiers before him, going back some 50 years. I don't get that. I just don't understand why this government would choose to table legislation that doesn't totally go back to exactly the fair system, the appropriate system, the non-discriminatory system, that would allow any workers who wanted to join a union to simply sign the card, count them up, file them and, lo and behold, if the majority of workers want to have a union representing them in the workplace, they would get that. I don't understand why the McGuinty Liberals have decided that they want to be more like Mike Harris and the Tories, the very government that the people of Ontario so resoundingly sent packing in the last provincial election, the last general election. I really have no idea why they would choose to do that.

It's quite a disturbing situation, because I really get the sense that the McGuinty government just doesn't get it when it comes to who it is that would be well served by a card certification system and who it is that is being hurt, quite frankly, who it is that is being ignored, whose rights are being trampled on, by this particular bill leaving them out. That is my concern.

Again, I have no problem with the card certification system. It's a great system. It's a system that worked in this province for a very long time. It's a system that existed under every single government that we've had for the last 50 years: I mean Conservative, I mean Liberal, and I mean New Democrat—unfortunately, not the Harris government, but that was quite an anomaly when it comes to the way this province was ruined over that time frame, but nonetheless.

What I have to say is that these people who would benefit most from a card certification system are largely the people whom we would want to ensure have every opportunity to have their rights taken care of, their rights fought for, their rights enforced in the workplace. Because it's often some of the worst workplaces in the

province that result in the need, the desire, the wish, the movement of workers to collectively join together to have their rights enforced, because their workplaces have been places where, individually, they are having a difficult time enforcing their rights. So if they work together, perhaps they can get their rights enforced in the workplace, perhaps their quality of life in the workplace will be improved, perhaps instead of getting minimum wage they might be able to bargain collectively for a little bit more than that so that they can actually feed their families. Maybe they have problems in terms of health and safety in the workplace. Maybe their workplaces are exposing them to deadly chemicals. Maybe their workplaces have unsafe equipment or improper ventilation. So maybe by joining the union, by working together collectively, they can force a health and safety committee to be put in place—even though they should be anyway but oftentimes are not put in place and certainly are not effective unless the force of that collective voice is behind them.

I represent Hamilton East. We have some of the most difficult workplaces in which to work. We have steel mills, we have small manufacturing plants—and some of them are great employers. I certainly don't want to say that all employers are bad. That's not the truth. That's not the case. But you'll know very well that where there's a desire to address problems, it's where the employer has not figured out that his or her best asset is their employees.

This is why the card certification process is important. Those very workplaces where oftentimes workers are treated badly are the places that would benefit from a trade union and in fact are those same workplaces where the possibility of divide-and-conquer tactics, the possibility that the employer might intimidate the workers to decide to sign the card one day when they're working together and when they're talking to each other about their concerns and their issues and their goals and their desires and the things they want to achieve, not just for themselves but for the entire set of workers in that particular workplace—but when they're doing that and they sign their cards and they're talking about how they're going to move forward in the workplace, the date gets set for the ballot, the way the system is now. And what happens in between? What happens in between is the very thing that card certification prevents, and that is the intimidation factor.

Again, if workers are already being treated badly in the workplace or if they already have serious concerns about their health and safety or if they're already not obtaining the kind of quality of life and standard of living through benefits or through the work environment generally and they seek to have representation by a union to help them gain those rights, oftentimes those very workers are vulnerable to intimidation by the employer. That's the bottom line. That's the rub—that time frame in between when the possibility of intimidation of workers can take place that may change the vote from the

certification when they sign their card to the time when they vote on the ballot.

I've got to tell you something else. There's another group of workers who are particularly vulnerable in this scheme that currently exists, that the Harris government put in, that this government is only prepared to get rid of for one small sector of workers—the trades sector—and that is workers who are immigrants, workers who are refugees, workers for whom English is not their first language. A lot of time and a lot of care is taken in the process of getting workers to consider whether or not they are interested in signing a union card. That time has taken sometimes one on one, sometimes in small groups, often with interpreters, often with unionists from that culture or from that background or from that home country. A lot of time is taken to describe the process, to understand the rights, to deal with what kinds of things the union can do collectively for and with the workers in that workplace.

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The problem becomes, those workers will sign their card and they will be very much in favour of having the unions represent them, but then during that time when there's a possibility that employers can intimidate the workers in a particular workplace, that's when you see the big flaw in this government legislation.

During the initial times of this debate, during the second reading debate and some of the third reading debate, some people were saying, and quite rightfully so, that this bill is discriminatory and that it discriminates against some of the most vulnerable workers. But I don't know how much time people actually took to explain what that means. I've just taken that time because I think it's important. The very people who are often relegated, particularly when they first come to Canada, particularly when they first come to Ontario—those are the very people who will benefit most from the protection of their rights, having a trade union representing their interests. Those are the very people whom this government, again, talks the talk about, when they talk about immigration and when they talk about the value of immigrants to our community and to our economy, and when they talk about how they need to make sure that immigrants have their skills recognized when they come to live in Ontario. But it's not true. The government says that, but when they table legislation like Bill 144, they forget all about the immigrants, they forget all about their commitment, they forget all about their talk. And when the time comes to walk their darn walk, they don't do the right thing by those very people they pander to during elections, pretending with their announcements about how much they care about these people. If they really cared about them, if the McGuinty Liberals really gave a darn, they'd be making sure that they table legislation in this House that addresses some of the plight that immigrants have when they come here and work in our factories without the ability to organize and to be protected by the force of a collective agreement.

So I have to say that I'm very, very disappointed that after all of the debate and after all of the discussion, and the fact that they're going to be closing us down any second now, the government has refused to acknowledge that their bill is flawed and that they really did have an opportunity to do the right thing by all workers in Ontario and not to begrudge the tradespeople, not to begrudge all the other good parts of the bill that we, as New Democrats, support. We simply cannot knowingly turn our backs on the very vulnerable workers who need the protection of Bill 144, who need the right of card certification in the workplace right here, right now in the province of Ontario. Those are my comments. Thank you very much.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): My constituents in Nepean–Carleton will not support this heavy-handed motion, not only to take away debate on Bill 144 but also to take away the secret ballot rights of voters. People in Nepean–Carleton, who I am privileged to represent, say no to David “The Hammer” Caplan’s motion.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? No.

Mr. Caplan has moved government motion number 411.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a notice of motion—to move a notice without notice regarding standing order 9(a).

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Just give us a moment here.

Mr. Baird: Can we have a five-minute recess to let the government get its act together?

The Acting Speaker: From my information here, the unanimous consent is to move a motion without notice regarding this afternoon’s sitting. Is that your motion?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 9(a), the House may continue to meet past 6 p.m. today for the purpose of considering Bill 186 and Bill 136.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills for the purpose of introducing two government bills.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Caplan, on behalf of Mr. Bryant, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to amend the Election Act, 2005 /
Projet de loi 213, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The Acting Speaker: Does the member have a short statement?

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure
Renewal):** No, Speaker.

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mr. Caplan, on behalf of Mr. Bryant, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, to repeal the Representation Act, 1996 and to enact the Representation Act, 2005 /
Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, abrogeant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale et édictant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The Acting Speaker: Does the member have a short statement?

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure
Renewal):** No, that’s fine, Speaker.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY (continued)

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 6, 2005, on the motion for third reading of Bill 136, An Act

respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans / Projet de loi 136, Loi sur l'établissement de zones de croissance planifiée et de plans de croissance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate. The Chair recognizes the member from Erie–Lincoln.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Well, I'll stop now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues all. How very kind. Now I'll have to scrap the original tone of my speech and be nice.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague opposite asks me to speak about 406. I have to give credit to my friend there from Niagara Centre. He had a good line just a moment ago. He told the Minister of Transportation they're going to call it Highway 203, because they're doing only half of what should be done. I gave full credit to Niagara Centre, as he deserved, for that line.

We're pleased to see Highway 203 moving forward, the 4.8 kilometres or whatever it was they announced. We hope they will continue four-laning to East Main Street in Welland and extending to Port Colborne. We were pleased to see the progress on Highway 203 this afternoon. I'm pleased the minister was down there for the announcement. I wish I had been on the invite list. I think my name must have slipped off the invitation list. I'm sure it was not the minister; it was probably somebody in the communications office.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: My staff was there, I know. We had our spies who had ferreted this out, and they got there to hand out press releases. But we are pleased to see Highway 203, half of 406, moving forward.

The concerns we have with Bill 136 remain. We brought forward some very thoughtful amendments to the bill at committee that unfortunately were not adopted by the minister or the members of that committee. If they had been, you may have seen us voting in favour of Bill 136, but unfortunately, you shot them down.

We could have made the bill a very solid bill as a result, but there are still fatal flaws: for example, giving the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal too much authority to intervene in local plans. No disrespect to the capabilities of the minister himself, but we have seen a very unfortunate trend in the Dalton McGuinty government of consolidating considerable power in the hands of the ministers themselves and in the hands of cabinet. It began with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing under Bill 26 and also under Bill 135, as well as some other reforms they've brought forward to give the minister authority to interfere with the OMB, to declare a provincial interest without any kind of notice or clarity as to why the intervention took place.

So the question is: Can you always trust the minister? Can you trust, particularly, a minister of the Dalton McGuinty government to make the right decision? We have no choice but to say no, based on the evidence available.

Nothing personal to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal; there's just been a pattern established by the government members that shows—we don't believe they can be trusted to make the right kinds of decisions, with their penchant for overriding municipal authority, particularly on Planning Act issues.

I have to say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal as well that we are still hoping that we will see, one day, greater clarity in terms of what the five-year infrastructure plan actually is. We've heard there's a list of 103 hospital projects, but we're not sure exactly what those hospital projects are: which ones are public-private partnerships, which hospitals will be rebuilt, which ones will be expanded, which ones will simply have some renovations done to them. We wonder if there truly is a real plan.

The same thing goes for highways or transit systems. We would expect a five-year plan with details of the investments in each and every one of those areas. The growth plan as a whole reminds us of—if you remember that movie with Kevin Costner—Waterworld. It had a big budget; it had a star and some name recognition behind it. There was a whole lot of hype and expectation built up around Waterworld, and the trailers looked pretty good. When you heard a lot about it, you said, "I might want to go see this to see what's in it." But when Waterworld came out, it wasn't such a hot show after all. In fact, it tanked at the box office.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, it may be a classic like Plan 9 from Outer Space, but not the classic kind I think they expected it to be.

I'm sensing a growing disappointment that after a lot of talk of a major investment in infrastructure, after a lot of talk about public-private partnerships and changing the way we do things, there is some growing disappointment with a lack—I know the minister brought a detailed, visionary plan to cabinet—that's what I expected of him—but when it got to the cabinet table, it got watered down. The original script, like Waterworld, got watered down, and what came out at the end of the day was in many ways very disappointing compared to the buildup beforehand.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Like Star Wars.

Mr. Hudak: You know, the original Star Wars was pretty good, just like the original Smart Growth strategy that began under Premier Harris and under Chris Hodgson. So to use a Star Wars analogy, the first stuff was pretty good, and then a few years later they came back with a model that was not nearly as entertaining. So we see in Places to Grow, while it was based on similar principles as Smart Growth, similar themes as the original Star Wars movies—the fourth Star Wars movie was a significant disappointment, and we'll say the same thing in terms of what was in the plan that came out, ReNew Ontario. For example, the \$30-billion plan really contains a lot of re-announcements, projects that had already been announced by the government, dressed up as something new or exciting. Most of it is very routine stuff that was

already announced by that government, already announced by our government. I think it includes the local share in hospital funding, for example. So it's not truly a \$30-billion provincial investment, but includes local giving to hospital projects. As well, they're counting in money given from the federal government toward infrastructure projects or municipal partners. So truly not a \$30-billion—

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): No, not including municipal.

Mr. Hudak: It doesn't include municipal, he says—but not truly a \$30-billion provincial announcement.

I think there are a number of people who were initially excited about the hype of this project and this program who are disappointed that only a \$2-billion sum is for public-private partnerships. I think they have changed the name, because Dalton McGuinty at one time campaigned against 3Ps. He wanted the Premier at the time, Ernie Eves, to stop every 3P, every public-private partnership in the province, but now they embrace them. They say somehow it's different, so I guess they changed the order of the Ps. So now instead of 3Ps, it's P3s. I think to stakeholders out there it sounds like a lot of the same stuff, but when you play these kinds of games with words, when you say one thing before the election and you do something else, investors are going to wonder: When is a deal when it comes to the Dalton McGuinty government? Let me give you a few examples.

One of the first things they did in office, they said they were going to scrap the 3P hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. They didn't agree with these; they wanted to get rid of them. Well, what did they do? They actually tinkered with it, wrapped a red ribbon around it, called it their own and proceeded with the projects. Fair enough. We were happy to see those new hospitals go forward, and I'm pleased. I know Tony Clement in Brampton is very happy, I know my colleagues in Ottawa are very happy with these announcements, but then it should have been much more direct and straightforward that they were going to go ahead with the 3P hospitals. When you say one thing and do another, that creates uncertainty in the private sector and from those investors.

We also had MRI and CT clinics that we brought in. They were private clinics paid for through OHIP. So you had private sector investment and management, by all accounts doing a very good job in terms of the quality of service, reducing the waiting lists, and the Dalton McGuinty government went in there and used taxpayer dollars to buy them back. So nobody benefited from additional MRIs, nobody benefited from additional CT scans, nobody benefited from better health care; they simply changed the ownership model but used scarce health care dollars to do so, again creating uncertainty.

My colleague the Minister of Transportation has used, from what I have read, taxpayer dollars to attack a private sector company in Spain. Now, maybe they're not happy with part of the 407. They have their arguments with the 407. But to actually take a campaign, a political campaign, and to wage it in Spain, to use taxpayer dollars to

attack a company doing a public offering in Spain goes beyond the pale. And you wonder what kind of signal that sends to European or American or other Canadian investors that want to make a deal with the government when they are attacking a partner that is doing a public offering in a foreign country. It's questionable, the tactics. I believe, as a result of those examples, and others, that they have created an Ontario premium, that the government of Ontario will have to pay a higher rate of return to private sector investors as a result of that uncertainty. If you are reaching out on one hand to the private sector for a partnership, but you are bashing them with a closed fist on the other, that is going to cause the private sector partners not to invest in the province at all or to charge a higher premium to compensate for that uncertainty. And I do worry about that. I do worry about the long-term impact that the uncertainty causes.

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The other big issue that I will address—and it has to do with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, but more so the Minister of Transportation—is whatever happened to the GTTA? This was a big initiative to break gridlock. It was going to be bold and visionary. I know the Speaker is concerned about what I have to say about gridlock and the GTTA. It was announced, reannounced, and in a story and a column and a story and a column. It was a long time coming, with a lot of talk about it. No progress. No progress at all on the GTTA. It has disappeared. This mighty vision to create a transportation authority to invest in and to coordinate transit seems to have disappeared into the ether, which means the problem with gridlock is just going to be exacerbated and will just get worse.

There are other projects that we think are good projects we'd like to see. Of course, as the member for Erie—Lincoln, I would like to see funding going toward the water and sewer project in Lincoln. I met with some taxpayers from Sydenham who have similar concerns about the bill being attached to them.

Of course, if the government were truly committed to investing in roads—because you need a balanced approach between transit investment and investments in roads and bridges and highways—then we would actually have seen progress on the mid-peninsula corridor. I'm happy to see some funds going toward the 406—not as much as we would like to see on the opposition side, but some progress—but if they were truly committed to the mid-peninsula corridor, instead of seeing more studies and reissuing studies that were done as far back as 2001, we would have seen some bold decisions made moving forward on that project. But I fear, instead, the intention to hide behind study after study after study and not actually making any decision whatsoever on that project. So when election time in 2007 comes around again, that project will be no further ahead, not one foot of blacktop laid and traffic problems and congestion will get worse, and the investments that may have come for trade and tourism will have not taken place.

So we have continuing concerns about the bill. We regret that the amendments we brought forward were not adopted by the government, and we are seeing what individuals and journalists are increasingly saying: When it comes to an actual infrastructure investment plan, there is no meat in the sandwich. To use that old 1980s axiom—I hate to quote Walter Mondale, but I think he used it—“Where’s the beef?” I say to the minister, where’s the beef? Where are the projects? Where is the investment plan? Where is the vision? I think that’s missing, and I think this is nothing really but a cover story for investments that will never actually really take place.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): The member for Erie–Lincoln has given a very strong indictment of this bill and has convinced me to vote against it.

The Acting Speaker: Any further questions and comments? Any reply?

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments from my colleague, particularly the helpful comments from Nepean–Carleton. I’m glad that I convinced him, and I hope the momentum will continue and we’ll win some votes over there as well against Bill 136. Maybe the colleague will take his seat and vote for it, which will signal a change and bring back those amendments we had brought forward.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate? Any reply?

Mr. Caplan has moved third reading of Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a 30-minute bell.

The Chair has received a note from the deputy whip: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Caplan for third reading of Bill 136, Places to Grow Act, be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, June 13, 2005.” So ordered.

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF PEEL ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA MUNICIPALITÉ
RÉGIONALE DE PEEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 31, 2005, on the motion for third reading of Bill 186, An Act respecting the composition of the council of The Regional Municipality of Peel / Projet de loi 186, Loi traitant de la composition du conseil de la municipalité régionale de Peel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges.

Applause.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to thank all members for that applause, especially the Minister of Transportation, for whom I did some incredibly important preliminary work. I just am looking forward to him finally building on that foundation that I established for him in that ministry.

I’m going to take this opportunity, while the Minister of Transportation is here, to appeal to him on behalf of York region. I put this issue to him in a question about a week ago, and it relates to phase 2 of York region’s transit project. We, of course, had committed, as you know, \$50 million, and I credited the minister in my question to him with following through on that commitment that our government had made. The federal government made their contribution of \$50 million as well. Now that project is well underway, and it’s important that York region get confirmation of the government’s commitment to phase 2.

During the question, as, of course, is the minister’s wont, I received mere equivocation, although in a personal conversation thereafter—and I won’t betray a confidence here—the minister certainly gave me every indication that he believes in this project very much, that he believes that his initial \$50-million investment was a wise one, and that he would certainly be supporting phase 2.

So following my remarks, if the minister is still here, there is an opportunity for comments, and I would look forward, actually—and I know that you will welcome it too, Speaker—to hear from the minister and make his commitment, his absolute commitment to funding phase 2 of York region’s transit project here today. I would be happy to commend him and, in fact, put out a press release thanking the minister for that commitment that he may make. So I will look forward to that.

But the bill that is before us today for debate is a piece of legislation around which there is a great deal of controversy. It’s not an easy one, and I know it’s not an easy one for some of the government members. In fact, I was in the Legislature when the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale stood in his place and made a statement for which, frankly, I respect him highly.

I refer to Hansard of May 3, when the member said the following: “I want to start by thanking the people of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. I’m proud to represent them at Queen’s Park,” and so the member should be, as we all are, to represent our constituents.

But the member goes on to say the following, and for this, I respect him. He said, “My riding has a part of Mississauga and a part of Brampton. I have held two public meetings, one in Bramalea and one in Malton. The people of my riding have told me, and I have listened to them,” and this is where the real test comes for members of this place. It’s one thing to listen; then it’s another thing to act. The member not only listened, but he heard and then he chose to act because he went on to say this:

“They have spoken their minds, they have spoken from their guts and they have spoken their hearts to me. They have told me that Bill 186 is not fair to the people

of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. It does not really represent them. What they are looking for is fairness in representation in the Peel region, from Brampton as well as Mississauga. The people of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale have told me that I represent them fully, and I'm accountable to them." The member goes on to say, "If this bill goes through, this will not give fair representation to Brampton, as well as to Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. I definitely want to listen to the people of my riding." Then he said this, and congratulations to the member for saying this, "I am committing myself to vote against Bill 186."

1730

I ask members of the Legislature to give the member a hand for that stand of courage he took.

Applause.

Mr. Klees: You see, honourable colleague, that there wasn't rousing applause from members of the government benches.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): He already got it.

Mr. Klees: The chief government whip said he already got it. I can well imagine what he already got. I am sure it wasn't a round of applause from members of his own caucus. But I know the member's constituents will appreciate that.

We have taken the position in this caucus that what this bill needed was considerably more consultation, that we needed to hear from residents who are going to be affected by this. We needed much more input from those councillors who have the business and the responsibility of representing the constituents who live in this area that is going to be affected by this bill, the region of Peel. To our great disappointment, we were not able to secure the degree of consultation that we were looking for, that we were appealing for, that I know the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale also would have preferred to have. Another member who is caught in this incredible bind, of course, is the member from Brampton Centre. She is not here right now but—

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): She is.

Mr. Klees: Oh, she is. There she is. My apologies to the member. I note she was just in conversation with the chief government whip. I trust that the chief government whip was being kind and that there wasn't too much arm-twisting going on there. I know the chief government whip is an honourable person and he would also allow the member to vote freely on this issue. I have no way of presuming how the member from Brampton Centre is going to vote on this, but I believe her constituents will be able to count on her to vote according to what would be right for members in her riding. I have no doubt she has the integrity to do exactly that. It's a difficult circumstance to be in. Nevertheless, that's what we are elected to do, to make the difficult decisions.

With regard to this legislation, I will be voting against it. The reason is that I have listened very carefully. It's not in my riding. Obviously, if it related to York region, then I would have a personal basis on which to make my decision. I've listened very carefully to the two members

who are in the middle of this debate and who have taken this very strong and principled stand. I want to support them in the final vote on this bill. I trust that other members from the Progressive Conservative caucus will also stand with them. It's not a matter of simply being against the legislation for the sake of opposing it; I don't believe that's right. There should always be good, strong reasoning and principles behind our decisions.

In this particular case, I believe there are. This legislation needed much more consultation and time for us to really deliberate and ensure we had it right. I look forward to the opportunity to take my stand with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale and the member from Brampton Centre. In the final analysis—who knows what time will bring ultimately—we trust the right thing will be done for the residents of Peel region.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to speak a little bit about Bill 186, and I also want to address some of the issues my colleague raised on the other side.

I want to go on record to say that Bill 186 creates fairness, equity and an even playing field. It also takes the population base into consideration. The member on the other side talked about the York region transportation project. I want to assure the member on the other side that we think it's a great project, and we are going to work with the region of York to support this project. Sometimes what happens in this House is that when we are talking about Bill 186, they want to talk about York region, and when we are talking about Bill 144, they want to talk about Bill 169.

There were some comments made by my colleague the member from Leeds–Grenville earlier today. I want to correct some of the statements he made. With regard to Bill 169, I want to say that this is an important piece of legislation to protect passengers and travelers in this province. We are not looking to replace the current municipal licence regime at all. It changes nothing.

The other is that he made some allegation that we did some fundraising. We did great fundraising in Peel region. There were 1,000 people who attended. There were less than 10 people from the taxi industry. He always makes not very factual statements, and this is not the first time he has done it. A couple of weeks ago he talked to me about the RV licensing system, a system that has been in place for 25 years; in fact was put in place by the previous Conservative government. He tried to tell us that we did that.

I think what we should do in this House is focus the discussion on the bill we're talking about and not talk about anything else, but the Conservative members always want to vent their anger or display their derision.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I wasn't going to stand up and make any comments, but I'm inspired by my good friend the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Of Highway 203.

Mr. Baird: Of Highway 203, the member for Niagara Centre says.

I thought the member for Oak Ridges gave a good speech about the process of the bill. I think it says a lot about the member for Oak Ridges, that when he rose to speak, he got applause, for those of you watching this on television, from all sides of the House. I think that speaks to the admiration in which this member is held by all members of the House.

I will be voting against this bill. I totally disagree with the process and the one-offs this Premier has made. This is just another example of a broken promise by Dalton McGuinty. He promised one thing before an election and another thing after the election. Take this issue: Not only did he promise one thing before the election and deliver another thing after the election, but he promised a lot of things after the election and didn't keep any of his promises. We used to get dizzy looking from his election platform and election promises to his legislation; now we get dizzy on just about every comment the man makes.

1740

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): It was not my intent to comment on this, because I didn't know that was what we were going to be doing tonight, but I really have to pass some comment on the member from Oak Ridges. He spoke from the heart and he spoke some very real truths. He talked about what the process was here and he did say something about the members from Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale and Brampton Centre being here today, and I'm proud that they're here today. I have been in this House every single time that this bill has come up, waiting for them to be given an opportunity to speak for 20 minutes about what is happening in their municipality and in their constituency and to talk about how the people they represent feel. With the exception of one two-minute response, I don't believe that I have heard anything from them. I don't blame them at all. I think that what has happened here is that they have been closed right in by their caucus. They have been told not to speak about this. They have been told that it'll go away.

But I have to tell you, with the greatest of respect, this is not going away in Brampton; this is not going away in Caledon. The people in those communities are incensed by what is going on. They are incensed by this government. They feel betrayed because this government and the Premier who is in charge told them that nothing was going to happen around this bill, and where are we? We're at third reading in a matter of weeks.

This bill is an atrocious bill. It is not going to do anything that it was supposed to do. It's being rammed through. In the end, all that it is going to succeed in doing is something you say that you don't want. If you went to the committee hearings, you heard what the mayor and the people who were with the mayor said, that this is a precursor to separation. That's all they want this bill for. You're playing right into their hands. You are going to destroy one of the finest regional governments in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the Chair recognizes the member from Oak Ridges in reply.

Mr. Klees: I want to thank members who have commented. The Minister of Transportation went to the brink, but failed to make his commitment to York region. We're going to have to just keep putting on the pressure for that project.

I want to just wrap up my comments, again, by reaffirming that I will be voting against this bill for the reasons that I stated during the debate.

Also, in the course of this debate I received a bulletin from my constituency office, from my constituency assistant, Neave Greig, who advised me that she is a golfing partner of Ken Mossop, who is a cousin, I believe, to the member from Stoney Creek. I had the pleasure of meeting him, a fine gentleman. I just want to say that if the member from Stoney Creek has anything of a handicap like her cousin Ken, then I would want to be at least in her foursome. If we don't share political philosophies and positions, then perhaps we can at least enjoy a round of golf together.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: On the last occasion when I was speaking to this bill, and I don't know how I didn't get an opportunity to—

The Acting Speaker: The member has already spoken on the bill at this stage. We need unanimous consent for the member to finish off his lead. Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed.

Mr. Prue: I thank all of the members, but I have to tell you, I'm a little surprised. On the last occasion—

Applause.

Mr. Prue: I'm glad to have so many friends and so many fans. I feel almost like a hockey star—and maybe I am in Brampton and Caledon.

On the last occasion, I was in mid-leadoff, and what I had talked about on that occasion, I'd just like to—

Mr. Kormos: You were in mid-rant.

Mr. Prue: Yes, mid-rant. I was speaking on that occasion about what had happened. I likened what had happened to the two solitudes that have become so famous in Canada—how we now have two solitudes in the region of Peel. We have one side which is made up of Mayor McCallion and the people who follow her lead, and we have on the other side those who believe that the mayors of Brampton and of Caledon and the regional chair are correct in what they have to say. We have a government that has played into the hands of what can only be described as a secessionist movement.

I have to tell you, I was really quite surprised.

I think all of you should turn around and have a look and a discussion with the member from Scarborough Centre, because he was there when we had a discussion with all of the people who came out to talk about this bill.

We went first to Brampton. Then we left Brampton in the afternoon and went to Mississauga. We listened to a number of speakers speak about this bill. We heard them say what was good about the bill and we heard them say

what was bad about the bill. But I want to tell you, there were two solitudes. There was the Brampton-Caledon group in the morning, and then, with one exception, there was the Mississauga group in the afternoon.

In the morning, we heard the people from Brampton-Caledon, who talked about how this was going to very much hurt their community. We heard them talk about the fact that theirs is one of the most rapidly growing communities in Ontario and in Canada. We heard them talk about the regional government that worked for them. We heard Emil Kolb, who has been my friend for many years, from when I was a mayor. We heard him talk about how the region of Peel has won awards. We heard him talk about how the region of Peel should be sustained and should be built upon and should grow. We heard him say that what was happening was only going to hurt the regional municipality of Peel. We heard all of those things in the morning.

In the afternoon, we went to Mississauga. What did we hear from Mississauga? Well, I have to tell you, I was somewhat disappointed at the discussions, save and except one discussion in the afternoon that we heard from Mississauga. We heard from the mayor, we heard from the chamber of commerce, we heard from a youth group, we heard from various citizens' and ratepayers' groups, who all said the same thing. To a person, they said the same thing: that they welcomed this government bill, not because they thought that having two extra people was going to do a great deal for Mississauga, but because they all saw it as the precursor to secession. The mayor said that she still wants to break away, and now you are going to make it easier for her to break away. Then the board of trade said, "We want to break away. Thank you very much for this bill, because you are going to make it easier for us to break away." We heard from a youth group who said the same thing. Then we heard from ordinary citizens' and ratepayers' groups. With the exception of the one lone man from Mississauga who came at the end—and I hope to speak about him later—all of them spoke about the need to destroy, break up, get rid of the region of Peel.

What has the region of Peel done that is so wrong that this government wants to destroy it? I don't know. I don't think you know. This is a region that continues to win award after award after award for municipal government. This is a region that has worked for 30 or 40 years. This is a region that has done a very good job for the citizens who live there. What is the great fault of this region? I don't think it has anything to do with the region. The great fault, the problem with this, is that one municipality, Mississauga, has the majority of citizens contained within its borders. That's the only fault. That is the only fault of that regional government. No other regional government anywhere in Ontario has the majority of members on that regional government from one municipality, but this government over here is bound and determined that you're going to let that happen. You're going to do it because you want to see Peel destroyed. You will be successful, whether it takes a week or a year or two years

or five years. Because what you are doing is playing precisely into the hands of those people in Mississauga who no longer want to be part of the region of Peel.

1750

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence): Name names.

Mr. Prue: I will name names. The mayor has said so. It's right on the record. Had you been there, Mr. Colle, you would have heard that, because she said it. They all said it.

Mr. Colle: You said she was a great mayor the other day.

Mr. Prue: She's a good mayor, but she still wants to separate, and I can't agree with her on that, even though you can, even though all of you can, and it is a huge, huge mistake.

I am telling you, I am appalled with the decision that has been made by this government and the way you have rammed this through. First of all, you went out and you said you weren't going to do anything and the Premier wrote letters and assuaged all the fears: "We're not going to do anything."

And then—I don't know what happened—you went out and you got Justice Adams and you said, "Justice Adams, we're going to listen to him." Justice Adams issued a report, and his report told you not to do what you're doing. You took a look at this report and said, "We're not doing this. He's made nine recommendations. We're only going to follow one of those recommendations, which is to give Mississauga two extra seats." You didn't follow the ones saying give Brampton five, and the other ones were all rendered totally moot, because what you have done is made it impossible for that region to continue to exist. I don't know why you are doing it. I am flummoxed. I don't know why you are doing it.

There was one brave guy from Mississauga who had the temerity, the guts, the unmitigated gall to stand up against all of you. I was surprised to find out a little bit of his background. His name is Stephen Wahl, and he's a Liberal. In fact, he ran for the nomination of your party in the last election in Mississauga South. He didn't win. You nominated someone else, the member from Mississauga South, Mr. Peterson, who won and then he won the election. But this is a card-carrying, dedicated Liberal. He has written letter after letter after letter that none of you are even willing to answer.

I have here the great answer from the member for Scarborough Centre, at least from his staff, when Mr. Wahl wrote him the last letter on May 10. This is the kind of answer that Mr. Wahl gets from the parliamentary assistant:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Wahl. On behalf of Brad Duguid, this is to acknowledge receipt of your e-mail. I have forwarded your e-mail to Brad, and he is considering your concerns. Shall I obtain any form of feedback, I will notify you. Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns."

That is what Mr. Wahl gets from your party, and he is a member, and he was almost a candidate and almost in

this House. That's his answer. That's what he gets. This is the guy who showed up to tell you how wrong your bill was.

He wrote you a letter, and I only want to read some of it, because I think some of it is not parliamentary. This is the letter that he wrote to Premier McGuinty, Minister Sorbara and Minister Gerretsen dated June 1, 2005:

"I write to you as a citizen and as a Liberal living in Mississauga in the region of Peel in the province of Ontario."

I have to skip the next paragraph because it's not parliamentary. He goes on to say:

"As I have stated in previous correspondence with you, I am very much involved in a wide range of community activities in Mississauga, as well as my involvement with several Liberal riding associations. I have heard rumours and hard facts regarding some of the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and deals, tentative, assumed or otherwise, regarding Bill 186. What I am hearing gives me cause for alarm.

"There are a few ways that we can extricate ourselves from making the mistake of passing Bill 186. You could simply delay indefinitely third reading. You could let cabinet and caucus know that they are free to vote how they see fit without repercussions from the party. You could encourage undecided and uninformed Liberal members to be absent from the House at the time of the vote on third reading. You could send the Liberal members of Mississauga, who are under undue influence to comply with the wishes of the mayor of Mississauga, out on other tasks at the time of the vote on third reading. Much of this could be done by encouraging the government House leader not to defer the vote on third reading during an evening session of the Legislature, when many members have reason not to be in the House.

"Stephen Wahl

"Citizen of Mississauga

"Liberal in Mississauga"

This is what people in your own party are telling you. I don't know why you are doing what you are doing. No one understands why you are doing it. I have to tell you, it pains my heart. I have been in this House, in this legislative session, for nearly two years now. I watched in awe and in dismay and in consternation the people of Kawartha Lakes. Mike Colle, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, called it the city of great mistakes. That's what you called it. You coined the phrase "Kawartha Mistakes." You know how bad it is. You know your own party, when in opposition and in the leadup to the election, said, "We will honour your vote. If you don't want this abomination of a city, which we agree doesn't work, and you vote no, we will undo it."

What has happened? I watch in awe and dismay the minister stand up day after day when he is questioned by me, "What are you doing about democracy? What are you doing when the people have said this doesn't work and they want to go back?" All I hear is, "We're not going to go there. We're not going to listen to the people. We're not going to listen to what anybody has to say.

We're going to do what we damn well want to." I hope that is OK, parliamentary. You are going to do exactly what you want to do, and I am so disappointed you are doing that to those people. I am going up there on Saturday to talk to them again about how bad your government is around democratic issues, how you ought not to be believed on reform of democracy, the fundamental democracy of this province, when you have ordinary people who go out and exercise their vote and you choose not to acknowledge it.

Mr. Colle: It was close.

Mr. Prue: I don't care whether it was close or by one vote. If you won by one vote in this Legislature and you beat your candidate by one vote, I would say you are the member. It doesn't matter whether they won by one vote or 20 votes or 100 or 1,000; they won. You will not acknowledge ordinary democracy from those people, and it is a disgrace.

I ought not to be surprised. You will not honour the democracy of the people of Brampton and Caledon. You will not listen to their mayors. You will not listen to their councils. You will not listen to the people who are involved there. You have an ear fixed to one person. I love Hazel. We love Hazel. She is a smart woman. She is a powerful woman. But on this particular issue—I have told her right to her face and I will tell her through the medium of television and in the Hansard—she is wrong. You should have the guts to tell her she is wrong on this issue. You should not be doing what you are doing to the people of Peel. You should not be putting at risk this great regional government, and that is in fact what you are doing.

I am disappointed. Have you done this to anyone else? No. Would you do this to anyone else? No. In fact, Minister Gerretsen wrote to the people in Fort Erie who were asking to do exactly the same thing that Hazel McCallion is asking to do in Mississauga—i.e. to break up their regional government—and do you know what his answer was? "We don't do that. Our government is not going to do that for the people of Fort Erie. We don't agree with this. This is not part of our plan."

I do not understand. If it's not part of your plan in Fort Erie, if it's not part of the plan down there, I don't understand why it is part of the plan simply because Hazel McCallion tells you to do it. The two members who are here tonight, and the third member from the Brampton area, have a very tough row to hoe. I don't know how it will be possible for them in the next election, as Liberals, to walk down the street and say, "Vote for me and vote for our party because we are in tune with what you want," because everybody knows, in spite of how strong you have been on this issue, that you have not been allowed to speak. You have not been allowed to say what needs to be said. You have not been allowed an opportunity to get up in this House. You have been bulldozed by all the other members of the Liberal Party. I have to tell you—I will be very blunt to you—that it will be very difficult for you to win re-election, not

because you are bad members but because your party has done you in.

If I were a Liberal in those places, I would despair. I would despair that a party that I thought was going to bring democracy and honour and change things in Ontario ends up being just as bad, or even worse, than Mike Harris.

There's nothing else I have to say on this issue. Thank you very much for the opportunity of speaking.

1800

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): This is probably my last chance to talk about Bill 186, and I wanted to wrap up what I have said before on this bill.

The one day of hearings that we had on Bill 186, on May 6, was very hurriedly put together. I want to say here today in this House how proud I was of my residents who appeared that day. They brought forward some very thoughtful presentations, with an extremely limited time to put forward a position. They were passionate; they were articulate; they did me proud. I was proud to hear their articulation of some frustration that they had in such a professional way to the members who were there listening. There were 11 people who delegated in Brampton that morning. Of that 11, nine of them were from Brampton and two of them were from Caledon, most of them with very little presentation time—knowledge that it was even going to happen.

What I would like to do is quote someone who appeared that day. There were so many wonderful presentations that day that were thoughtful and articulate. People had obviously spent a significant period of time putting together their thoughts.

Michael Collins, who's a realtor in town, said:

"For the past 30-plus years, we have watched Mississauga grow into the world-class city that it is today. All the while, residents of both Brampton and Caledon have contributed their tax dollars to the region to help develop the infrastructure that Mississauga enjoys. The mayor of Mississauga is correct in the fact that Mississauga has two thirds of the residents of Peel. We know this because we have watched our tax dollars go to build her city for the past 30 years.

"Now that her city is complete, the mayor would like to break up the region, exactly when the focus is shifting to Brampton. By all estimates, we will experience rapid growth too. In fact, in 2009, it is expected that Brampton will have a population approaching that of Mississauga....

"So, at the very least, Bill 186 should be amended to provide a formula for Brampton's increasing population. For each incremental increase in the population, Brampton would automatically add those extra regional seats in time for the next municipal election. That way it would not be left to the province to pass new legislation each time Brampton deserves a new seat at the region. Justice Adams, in his report, recognized this need and tried to provide for it."

There's nothing I can add to that. I'm sorry about this legislation. I appreciate the thoughtful, passionate presen-

tations that my residents gave. They did us proud. I appreciate the time they took to come to speak on this issue.

Applause.

Mr. Baird: I would say to the member for Beaches–East York: good speech. I would say to the member from Brampton Centre: even a better response. There are not enough members with the passion she expressed.

The Acting Speaker: Reply from the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: I thank very much my colleagues who have commented on the speech. I'm trying to calm down a little because I was really getting quite riled thinking about what you're doing.

What you are doing is pretty sad. It's pretty sad. I think you ought to stop and think very long and hard about what you are doing. Other governments in the past have done things that have not helped municipal governments. This is not going to help the regional municipality of Peel. I fail to understand how you can ignore Judge Adams's report. I fail to understand how you can ignore all of the people who came to speak during that day. I fail to understand how you can ignore the three members who represent the ridings in Brampton.

Quite honestly, I have to ask that you stop and reconsider this. Mr. Wahl gave you five outs. Take a look at them. One of them is simply to withdraw this. One is simply to have a vote and then just not show up to vote for it.

I'm asking the members opposite to do the right thing. Just think about what the right thing is. Do you think in your heart of hearts that you are doing the right thing by the half a million people who live in Brampton–Caledon? If you think you're doing the right thing by them, then go ahead and vote for it, but if you do so, you will do it to the detriment of the three members who were elected in the Liberal Party in the last election. I cannot imagine that the good electors of Brampton and Caledon are going to forgive the action you are taking here today. It is a wrong-headed action. Please reconsider. It's a last opportunity; do it.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr. Baird: I am so impressed by the response made by the member for Beaches–East York. If there was unanimous consent that we could postpone and have further third reading debate and then a vote on this in the fall, after a summer of wise reflection, and intimidation from some—I would ask if there's unanimous consent to hold off further debate of third reading and to have a vote on this, perhaps in October or November.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Seeing none, further debate? Reply by the minister? No.

Mr. Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 186, An Act respecting the composition of the council of The Regional Municipality of Peel. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members.. There will be a 30-minute bell.

I've received from the deputy whip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Gerretsen for third reading of Bill 186, the Regional Municipality of Peel Act, 2005, be deferred until deferred votes, Monday, June 13, 2005."

The Chair recognizes the deputy House leader.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The deputy House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is there unanimous consent? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, June 13.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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